

Part I Colonial Life

Joaquin Pedroso Echevarría's 1795 baptism must have been a sumptuous affair for his family was one of the richest on the island of Cuba. Five years later, his grandfather, Mateo Pedroso, died leaving 2 million *pesos fuertes* in cash, considerable property, at least 10 sugar mills and extensive real estate holdings.¹ Unlike his ancestors who had been content to inherit family money,² Joaquin caught the new century's spirit of restless entrepreneurship. With his endowment, he became a leader in the epic economic transformation of his country.

Since long before Joaquin's time, Havana was the official gateway to an empire. A strategic location and ideal natural harbor made it the essential stopover point for the re-supply and repair of the Spanish flotilla. As a merchant and *regidor perpetuo*, a city councilor for life,³ Mateo Pedroso enjoyed the inside track on colonial transactions so that his wealth grew with the level of activity in the harbor.

Along with his fellow *hacendados*, or landowners, Mateo relied also on the rent from lands and real estate. The profit from sugar production was not as central to the economy as it came to be for at this time the English dominated the industry from islands of Jamaica along with the French from Saint-Domingue, the French colony that with its independence at the turn of the century became Haiti.

In contrast to his grandfather's reliance on rents and taxes, Joaquin looked to the industrial revolution for profit. Together with a minority of forward-looking planters the Pedroso brothers, Joaquin and his brother Luis, implemented the new steam technology for the milling and refining cane sugar. Further, they laid miles upon miles of tracks for steam engines to transport the cane from field to mill and then to port, so giving economic life to the interior of the island.⁴ By the mid-19th century the brothers were reaping the rewards of the infrastructure they had set-up, for Cuba led all countries in sugar exports and it dominated the booming North Atlantic market.

However, behind this commercial success lay a shadow that became increasingly difficult to ignore. Criollos, those who identified themselves with island culture and interests, were able to amass extraordinary fortunes throughout the first two thirds of the century only through their uneasy alliance with Spanish authorities for they relied on the colonial army to put-down any uprising by slaves or would-be liberators of the nation.

Their fear was well-founded for Joaquin's generation had grown-up in a world shaken by revolutions. The sundry nations of Latin America carved themselves out of the Spanish empire under the inspiration of the French, American and Haitian struggles for liberty. These wars of independence typically

¹ Oscar Zanetti and Alejandro García. *Sugar & Railroads, A Cuban History, 1837-1959*. trans. Franklin W. Knight and Mary Todd. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1987) 112

² The Pedroso family like the majority of the Cuban oligarchy had come to the island, largely in the 18th century, already possessing titles from military or other services to the Spanish monarchy. See: Knight, Franklin W. "Origins of Wealth and the Sugar Revolution in Cuba" *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 57.2 (1977) 231-253. (accessed 13 June 2011).

³ Thomas, Hugh. *Cuba, or, The Pursuit of Freedom*. Da Capo Press Inc., 1998 (re-print of original New York: 1977 edition) 30

⁴ Oscar Zanetti and Alejandro García, 1987. 112

involved guerrillas setting fire to crops, so setting the rural economies in disarray and drying up the flood of taxes to Spain. In Cuba, the prospect of cane fields and mills going up in smoke kept the several hundred elaborately intermarried families of the ‘sugarocracy,’ including the Pedrosos, faithful to Spain.

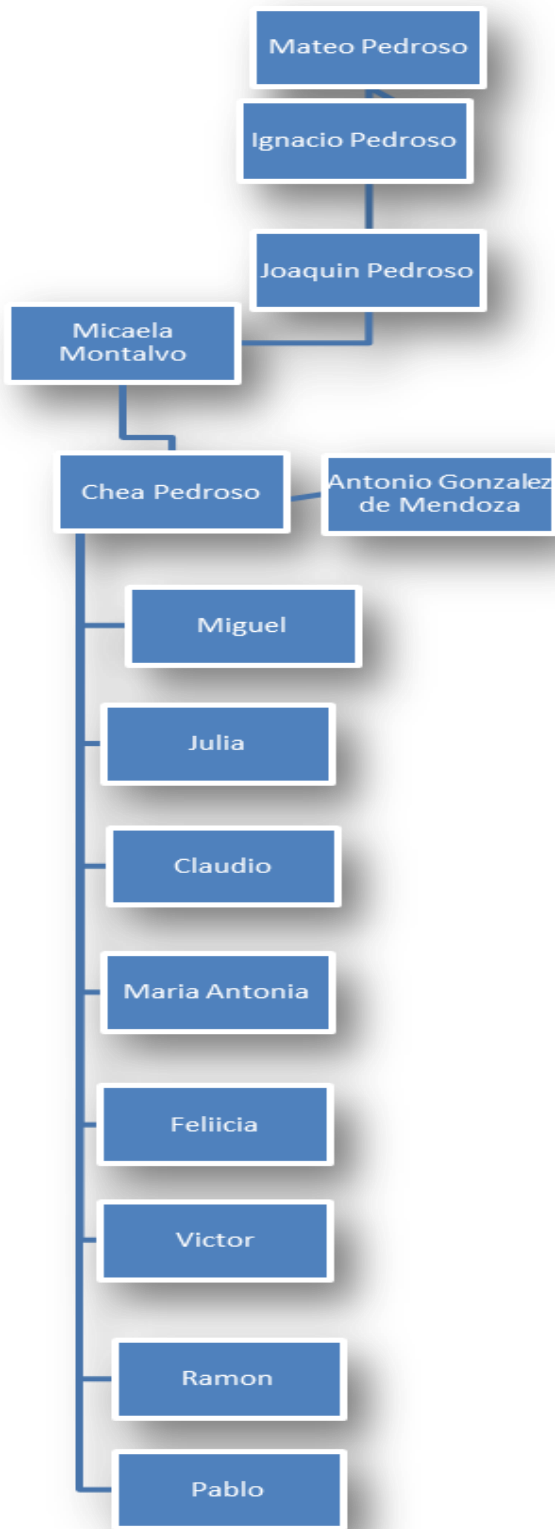
Contributing to the ambivalent criollo bond with the Spanish was a primitive horror of racial contamination by blacks. This fear grew as the proportion of blacks to whites tipped in favor of blacks with increasing numbers of slaves imported throughout the first half of the 19th century. With the assistance of the colonial military, Joaquin and his cohorts kept the lid pressed firmly on the boiling cauldron of discontent. Historians say that the price of this was a delay of the political evolution that brought other Spanish colonies to independence much earlier.

The first written accounts of the family history focus on the rejection of the Pedroso fortune and the rules of the sugarocracy by his daughter, Mercedes in marrying a relative nobody. Every family has a founding myth and the story of the young rebel couple binds the six or seven generations of our maternal line that last came together in Miami, July 2007. Not only did their descendants write and recount it as a testament of the family’s honor but they cherished this story of rebellion because it encapsulates a larger one, that of the birth of a nation.



Gonzalez de Mendoza family reunion, detail above: Batista branch, Miami Biltmore Hotel, 2007





Chapter 1 Romance versus the Oligarchy

A story of star-crossed lovers opens both surviving accounts of the Gonzalez de Mendoza family history.⁵ Mercedes, daughter of the haughty and wealthy Don Joaquin Pedroso falls in love with Antonio, an honest if unproven trial lawyer. His family, although respectable and prosperous, does not belong to the oligarchy, the network of wealthy families that dominates the colony's economy. The match is forbidden.

Having rejected Mendoza as a suitable son-in-law Don Joaquin is enraged by his independent-minded daughter, for Mercedes "Chea," leaves in secret to be married to Antonio from the home of an aunt. Many years after the 1855 elopement her daughter Julia, opens her chronicle of important events in her life with the statement: "My grandfather was opposed to the marriage because he was a friend of the aristocracy and wanted her to marry a title."⁶

Matilde, the eldest daughter of Julia also wrote of the elopement as a defining act:

The marriage had been a romance. Don Joaquin was opposed to the fact that this daughter who was graced with two of the most noble family names of Havana would marry a young lawyer who, although not without fortune was exercising his profession... something beneath the dignity of a gentleman, who was meant to live from the rents of his properties that others administered. Instead, the old man had his heart set on a match with the Forcade family. Love triumphed over paternal wrath. He went as far as barring her from the home in which she had spent a childhood of luxury and comfort. Protected by Doña Micaela [*her mother*] she was deposited at the home of an aunt for the simple ceremony. As in fairy tales, they lived happily ever after, each deserving the other.⁷

The link between the Pedroso and Forcade families

The power of the oligarchy rested on linking one family to an equally rich or richer one through marriage. Accordingly, the match planned by Don Joaquin for Chea held great benefits for him.⁸ The Forcade's sugar mills in the province of Matanzas were in the same region as his. This family's

⁵ Unpublished memoirs of Julia Batista and also of Matilde Batista

⁶ Julia Batista, unpublished memoirs

⁷ Matilde Batista: El matrimonio había sido un romance. D. Joaquin se oponía a que esta hija que ostentaba dos de los apellidos más antiguos de la Habana se casara con un joven abogado que aunque no desprovisto de fortuna, estaba ejerciendo su profesión... cosa indigna de un caballero; éstos debían vivir de sus rentas, y dejar a otros administrar sus propiedades. En cambio el Viejo veía con buenos ojos otro pretendiente de apellido Forcade. El amor triunfó sobre la ira paterna. Esta llegó a prohibirle la entrada en el hogar donde había transcurrido placida su vida rodeada de lujo y comodidades. Protegida por D. Micaela fué depositada en casa de una tía para la sencilla boda; como en los cuentos de hadas, fueron felices, eran dignos el uno de la otra." (unpublished memoirs)

⁸ The Cuban aristocracy, whose members' titles were conferred by the Spanish court, held distinct economic privileges. Some of these titles carried the power to tax specific forms of transactions others were status symbols that opened doors to commercial partnerships and marriages that could reap great profit.

agricultural investments had been seeded through slave trading, a practice they, along with many others, continued long after it was formally outlawed.⁹

In fact, the slave trade and the sugar industry were interdependent. Planters valued Africans as laborers because they were able to endure the hot, humid conditions as well as the arduous work that was cutting and milling sugar cane. Slaves were shipped to Cuba in sub-human conditions, only the strongest survived the ocean crossing. Moreover, significant numbers died during each harvest. A constant stream of enslaved Africans was needed to replace their dead counterparts.

Despite England and Spain having signed a treaty banning the slave trade in 1835, Spain was very tolerant of slavers. Colonial administrators knowing the importance of slaves to the Cuban economy, after collecting bribes, turned a blind eye on the illicit trade.¹⁰

Along with other forward-looking planters, by the 1820's Joaquin Pedroso and Pedro Forcade, at the time that their children reached a marriageable age, were investing in the newest sugar refining equipment in the form of the Desrosne centrifugal milling machine.¹¹ Its greater capacity for processing cane coincided with the expansion of railroads, fueling a feverish expansion of property. Consequently, slave imports that passed through Havana, the largest market in the Caribbean at the turn of the 19th century, tripled by 1827. By 1841 there were 436,000 slaves representing 45% of the population.¹² Like many other planters, Pedroso and Forcade's faith in scientific progress in the form of the new steam-powered mills did not preclude a continuing commitment to the slave trade.¹³

Cane must be transported to the mill within two days of cutting; once processed, the sugar has to be freighted and warehoused in a port with access to merchant ships. Therefore, along with slave labour and modernized mills, the basis of the new economy, and the one that most occupied Don Joaquin, was the railway.

⁹ Thomas, 1998. 109

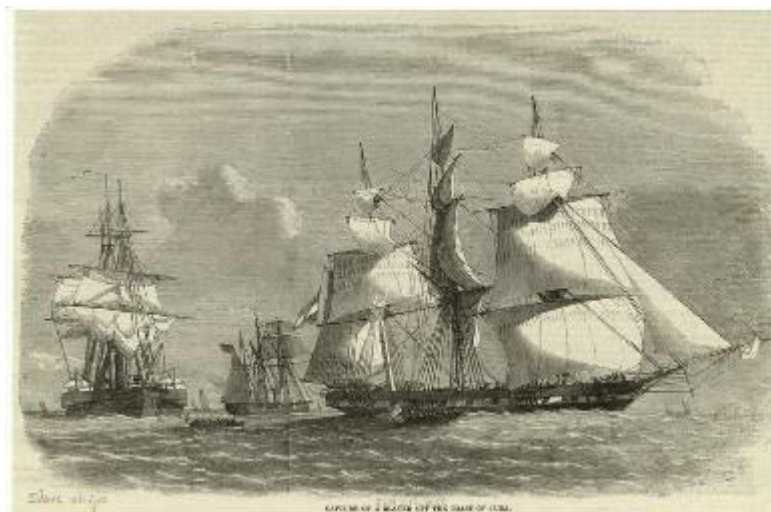
“Other planters who made their original capital from selling slaves after the formal ban on the trade were Pedro Forcade of Forcade and Font, slavers of Cádiz.” Thomas, 137

¹⁰ Thomas, 1998. 109

¹¹ Thomas, 1998. 138-9 Map: Cuba, Major Sugar Mills c. 1860 illustrating Matanzas sugar mills/owners and production (Pedro Forcade, Desrosne centrifugal machine 13th in production Sta Tomas or Descanso (Macuriges) Joaquin Pedroso Desrosne, 29th, Dos Hermanos (Macuriges) Joaquin Pedroso Desrosne 40th, S. Joaquin, Joaquin Pedroso, (Macuriges) Rillieux 50th

¹² Estrada, Alfredo José. *Havana, Autobiography of a City*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007, p. 82 quoting figures from Ramon de la Sagra's *Historia*, published in 1831

¹³ Bergad, Garcia, Barcia. *The Cuban Slave Market, 1790-1880*, (Cambridge: The Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge, 1995. 54



Capture of a slaver off the coast of Cuba. (1858), Illustrated London News. The English mounted a campaign to intercept slavers' ships on their trans-Atlantic crossing. [New York Public Library Digital Gallery](#)

The Oligarchy: railways and matrimony

In 1838, shortly after the first railway, stretching from Havana to Güines had been inaugurated, a group of landowners including the Montalvo family and the Pedroso brothers, petitioned for the port of Cardenas to be officially opened for international trade.¹⁴ Having obtained this, they began construction of a railway that would freight the cane from their mills to the new port.

As the historian Hugh Thomas has revealed through his minute studies of the Cuban oligarchy, the island's economic development was woven through patterns of kinship. In the case of railways, the direction of the tracks that still exist literally trace genealogy for Micaela Montalvo married Joaquin Pedroso in 1820, a date when the creation of the first railways into the prime sugar region of Matanzas where both families had plantations may have been in the air. The union between the two families would undoubtedly have facilitated the consortium for port and railway construction.

In 1844 the new Ferrocarril de Cárdenas' track was laid through Macuriges, near the village of Navajas, the Montalvo's estate that Don Joaquin would later inherit. However, being somewhat marginalized at the north-east end of the area serviced by that line, Pedroso drew together neighboring planters to create another line that connected his mill more directly to Cárdenas. The result was the Ferrocarril de Cárdenas a Júcaro, completed shortly after the Ferrocarril de Cárdenas. A separate depot on the west of the Cárdenas Bay was created as the terminus for this second line.

¹⁴ Zanetti and García, 1987. 40



Federico Mialhe, Mapa Historico Pintoresco Moderno de la Isla de Cuba. Hamburg: 1853 [Viewing Caribbean Cuba Map](#)



(detail, railway development to port of Cardenas)

Despite the competition between railway companies, such was the demand for the new transportation services that both were successful by 1846; accordingly, sugar mills tripled in number in the Cárdenas region. The two lines merged in 1857 with Joaquin Pedroso as a major shareholder and Luis as president. The company expanded lines east to the fertile region of Banagüises where the plantations that developed in the wake of the railway joined the Cardenas-Matanzas-Colon triangle in having the newest equipment and highest yields.¹⁵ By 1868, there was no further possibility of expansion for the railways in Matanzas.¹⁶



¹⁵ Thomas, 1998. 118

¹⁶ Zanetti and García, 1987. 112

Views of Cienfuegos (1864), above, Wharf of T. Terry Esq., Image ID: 1657378 below, Residence of the Captain of the Port of Cienfuegos. [At the [Head] of the Custom House Wharf, W.H.C.] , [New York Public Library Digital Gallery](#)



Miahle, Federico, Iglesia y camino de hierro de Regla. Isla de Cuba Pintoresca. 1839 p. 12 [University of Miami Cuban Heritage Collection](#)

Plantation, Railroad, Port

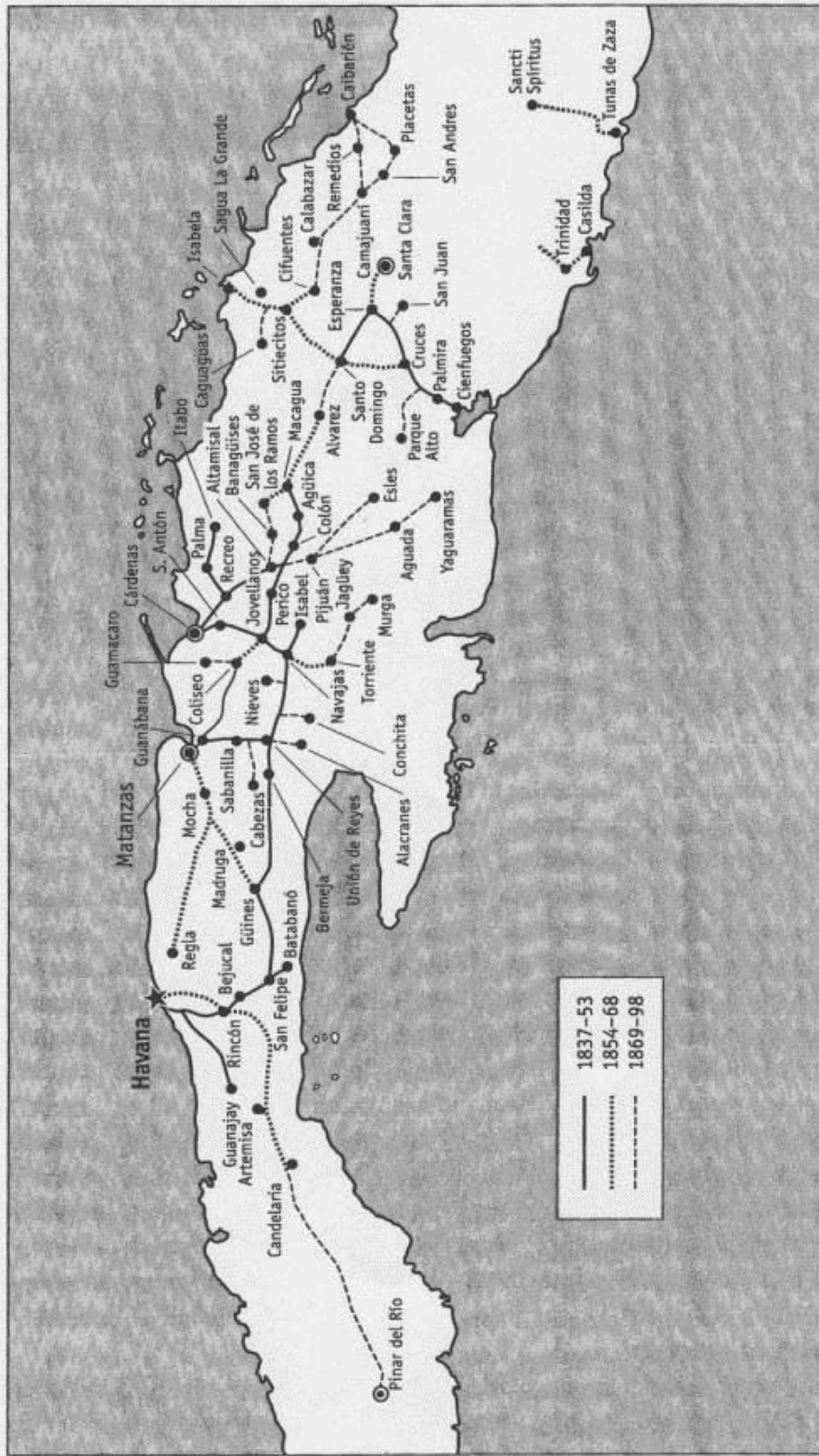
Other rail lines further west quickly followed in the boom year of the 1860s often financed by joint stock and promoted by plantation owners. The inauguration of a railway into the valleys in the centre of the island intensified the economic activity on many levels. It opened up land to agriculture and villages developed at way stations on the track. The lines crossed the island on a north-south axis connecting mills to ports. These became flourishing population centers with train depots, warehouses, customs houses, wharves, shipyards, and all the attendant officials, artisans, merchants, clerks and laborers. This became the pattern for rail development throughout the island. In connecting their land to port the initial group of investors would be rewarded when the region drew independent landowners who paid freight rates to transport their produce to port. In comparison, a railroad that served the public needs for transportation east to west, across the length the island was not created until the twentieth century.

The Pedroso brothers saw the future in railroads. They owned much of the stock in the Ferrocarril del Oeste, the second of the railroad companies founded in 1857 in Havana. Unfortunately, it had a history of financial difficulties. Luis Pedroso also had a large stake in the Bahía Railroad to link Havana

westward to the tobacco-growing province of Pinar del Rio. The brothers' struggle to supply sufficient manpower for track-laying led them to enter the coolie trade between Canton and Havana.¹⁷

The interdependent development of plantation, railroad and port spread rapidly through the island. Railroads drew settlers who farmed and could then be charged rates to transport their crops to port. Settlers, in turn, attracted commerce that would also depend on the railway to transport goods. Investors as far away as Europe feverishly gambled in the railway's power to open up virgin territory to limitless exploitation.

¹⁷ Zanetti and García, 1987. 112



MAP 3.1. Expansion of the Western Rail Network

map reproduced from Zanetti and Garcia, 46

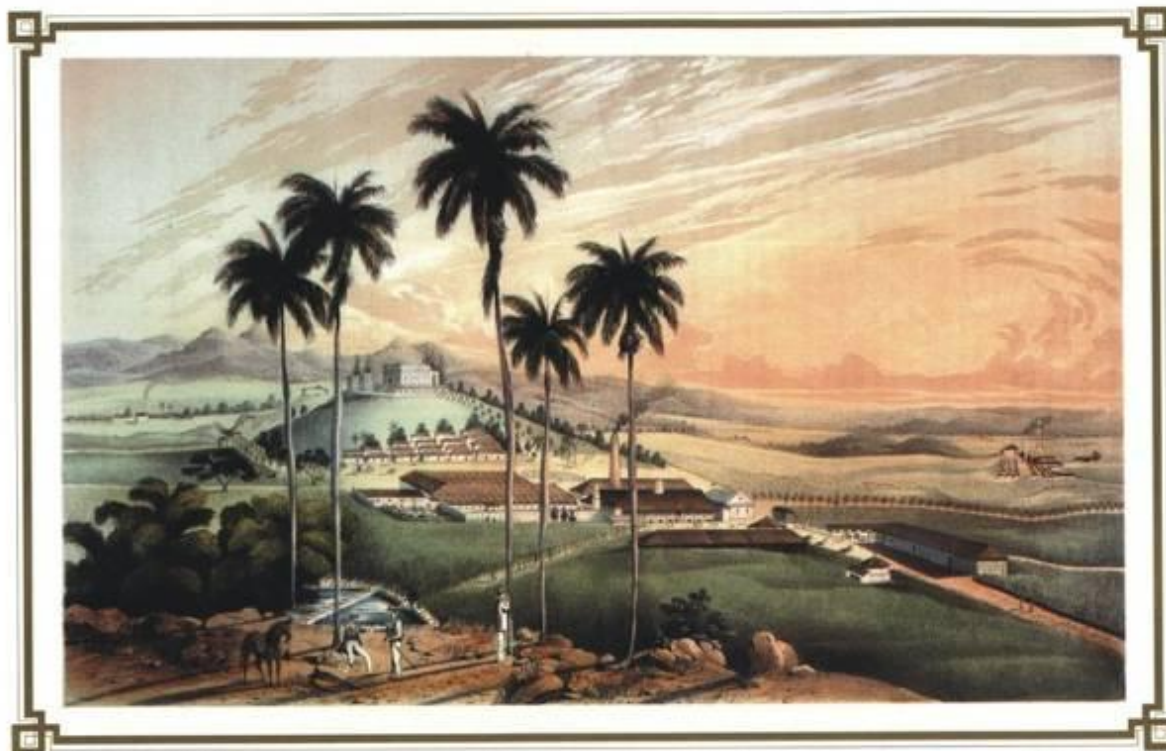


University of Miami, Cuban Heritage Collection

The perspective on the land of such entrepreneurs as Don Joaquin is neatly captured in several contemporary prints. The first, offers a viewpoint defined by a track receding into the horizon, its linear, rhythmic definition of limitless space framed on both sides by jungle growth: the two kinds of energy organic and industrial achieving a restrained and dynamic equilibrium in the frame.

In one of a series of lithographic illustrations for *Los Ingenios*, a showcase of the island's leading mills, French artist Eduardo Laplante presents an equally idealized man-made landscape. In the 1856 view of the Buena Vista mill the plantation house sits like a temple on a hill, framed by royal palms and the smoking millstack. The eye is drawn back and forth by roadways, tracks and paths that transform the softly undulating landscape into workable geometry, a checkerboard for entrepreneurial gaming in all directions. A steam engine bisects the horizon spewing a plume of soft gray smoke. This is one of a series of plantation portraits created, in part, with a view to selling it to the owner.¹⁸ They are statements of man's power to exalt and transform the land through his command of machines and armies of slaves.

¹⁸ In 1857, *Los Ingenios (The Sugar Mills)* was published in Havana. French painter and printmaker Eduardo Laplante travelled throughout the island, making sketches of the main plantations, which he later transferred to lithographic stones. The book's pages document the technological advancements employed in the sugar mills. Of the 28 illustrations, 19 are of exterior views and 9 are of the interiors of boiler houses *Cuba Art and History From 1868 to Today*, The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, catalogue for an exhibition produced by the museum in partnership with the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes and the Fototeca de Cuba in Havana. January 31 to June 8, 2008. ed. Bondil, Nathalie. p.54



Edificio y taller por E. LAFARDE

plátanos por Miquel Capelero Clapera y otros señores

Limpieza del MARQUER.

INGENIO BUENA-VISTA
Propiedad del S^o D^o JUSTO G. CANTERO.

Eduardo Laplante, Ingenio Buena Vista [Arquitectura Cuba blog](#)

In 1855, the year of his daughter Julia's elopement, Don Joaquin was in the thick of his personal economic expansion. He was enjoying the returns from three decades of investing his profits into controlling every aspect of sugar production, from planting to milling and warehousing the refined product at the port. Chea's marriage was a blow, not only economically but also to his patriarchal status. From that point on, Don Joaquin kept his other grown children in close proximity. Under his roof, his son Jacinto performed his filial duty throughout a relatively short life. He died after having followed his father into business and marrying an acceptable partner. A daughter, Maria Luisa, also remained in the household after marrying. "Pepa," who was known as being "passively insane" was kept deep within the family home.¹⁹ The exception was Manuel, who became a Jesuit priest, lived most of his life in Madrid and turned his inheritance over to the church.²⁰

¹⁹ "Con ellos vivian sus hijos Ma. Luisa casada con Jose Ramirez Arellano y sus dos hijos Jose Maria y Yoyó, Geronima Mantilla vda de su hijo Jacinto Pedroso, con sus hijos Gonzalo, Ramiro, Maria Caridad y Joaquin, y Pepa, hija soltera y loca

Don Joaquin built a massive home in the heart of the city; known within the family as “Amargura” for the street on which it stood. During *la temporada* or the hottest months in which all of Havana society retreated to the country Don Joaquin moved his household to Calabazar, a rural village located on the rail line, just south of Havana. There, in a large summer home surrounded by smaller ones for his children and their families, he held court during his family Sunday dinners just as he did in the city.

The split between Pedroso and his son-in-law endured for many years. Despite this, Chea continued her close relationship to her mother, who had protected her from the worst of her father’s wrath and facilitated the secret marriage. Chea named her mother as godmother to Julia, her eldest girl. This explains how Julia, our great grandmother, came to own and value the portrait of Doña Micaela.²¹ Although Chea tried to make peace between her husband and father, their ideological differences for a long time made this impossible.

Julia vividly remembered the lasting bitterness of Don Joaquin. “My grandfather D. Joaquin had remained angry with my parents although my mother never stopped visiting him and she showed us how to kiss his hand as his other grandchildren did which was something that we did not like because we did not kiss our parents’ hands and in any case he didn’t even look at us.”²²

According to Julia, relations finally thawed when, many years later, his son-in-law drove out from Havana to Calabazar, where Don Joaquin was at his summer home with a broken arm, bringing him into the city so that a doctor could tend to him.²³ However, Julia’s eldest daughter Matilde in recounting stories that she heard directly from her grandfather, offers another version: “According to him, (Don Antonio) when they (the Mendoza family) returned from exile the attitude of Don Joaquin had changed and he happily received not only Chea and his grandchildren in his home but also his son in law whose merit he now recognized.”²⁴

tranquila desde los 5 años. Su casa era Amargura 21 esquina a Aguiar que a la muerte de Don Joaquin por ser demasiado grande se dividió en 3.” Julia Batista

²⁰ Julia Batista

²¹ “Mi abuela Micaela Montalvo, mi madrina cuyo retrato al oleo conserve en la sala si era cariñosa con nosotros.” Julia Batista

²² “Mi abuelo D. Joaquin siempre había seguido peleado con mis padres pero mi madre nunca dejo de visitarlo y nos enseñó a besarle la mano como los otros nietos, lo cual no nos gustaba pues no se la besabanos a nuestros padres, y el ni nos miraba.” Julia Batista

²³ “En el verano fuimos a Calabazar a una casa chica al lado de una muy hermosa donde pasaba D. Joaquin la temporada y daba comidas los domingos igual que en la Habana. Supongo que ya se habia efectuado la reconciliacion con mis padres, pues no recuerdo la fecha, y ocurrio de este modo. Estando mi abuelo de temporada en Calabazar se partió el brazo. Enterados mis padres que estaban en la Habana y como no hubiera tren en muchas horas fueron en coche llevandole un medico. Esto le agradó tanto y supongo que la constancia de Mama y el buen proceder de mi padre lo ablandó y llegó a tomarle cariño pues lo visitaba despues todos los dias y lo nombró su albaced.” Julia Batista

²⁴ “Contado por él – Cuando regresaron del exilio, la actitud de D. Joaquín había cambiado y con gusto recibía no solo a Chea y a los nietos, sino al yerno cuyo mérito ya conocía.” Matilde Batista



Album of Photographs (Views of Cuba at the turn of the 19th c.), p. 26 [University of Miami Cuban Heritage Collection](#)

Having seen her mother's ongoing efforts to ingratiate herself to her father, Julia's account focuses on her grandfather's rigid, unforgiving nature. In contrast, her daughter highlights the historical context, describing how the question of slavery defined her father's principles and was the source of the rift: "They had many heated debates on the question of slavery which Grandfather (Antonio G. Mendoza) declared to be un-Christian and against human rights. "That's what you say now," the old man (Joaquin Pedroso) would say, "because you don't own slaves but wait until Chea receives her inheritance and you will see how useful slavery is."²⁵

²⁵ "Sostenían grandes polémicas sobre la cuestión cadente de la esclavitud, que Abuelito declaraba ser contra la ley cristiana y los derechos de la humanidad. "Todo eso está bien", decía el viejo, "porque ustedes no poseen esclavos, pero yo quisiera ver cuando Chea me herede; ustedes cambiarán de opinion y verán que la esclavitud es algo muy útil." "No", protestaba Abuelito, "los dos pensamos igual y daremos la libertad a todos". Efectivamente, en la notaría de Lancís se hizo la escritura, cuya copia he leído, con la lista detallada de cerca de 200 negros del ingenio Sta. Gertrudis. Miguel, el hijo mayor, fue el encargado de proclamarles la libertad, que la mayoría no entendió; se quedaron trabajando en el ingenio y ganando jornal." M. Batista

Patriarchal Oligarchical versus Humanistic Democratic Cuba Libre

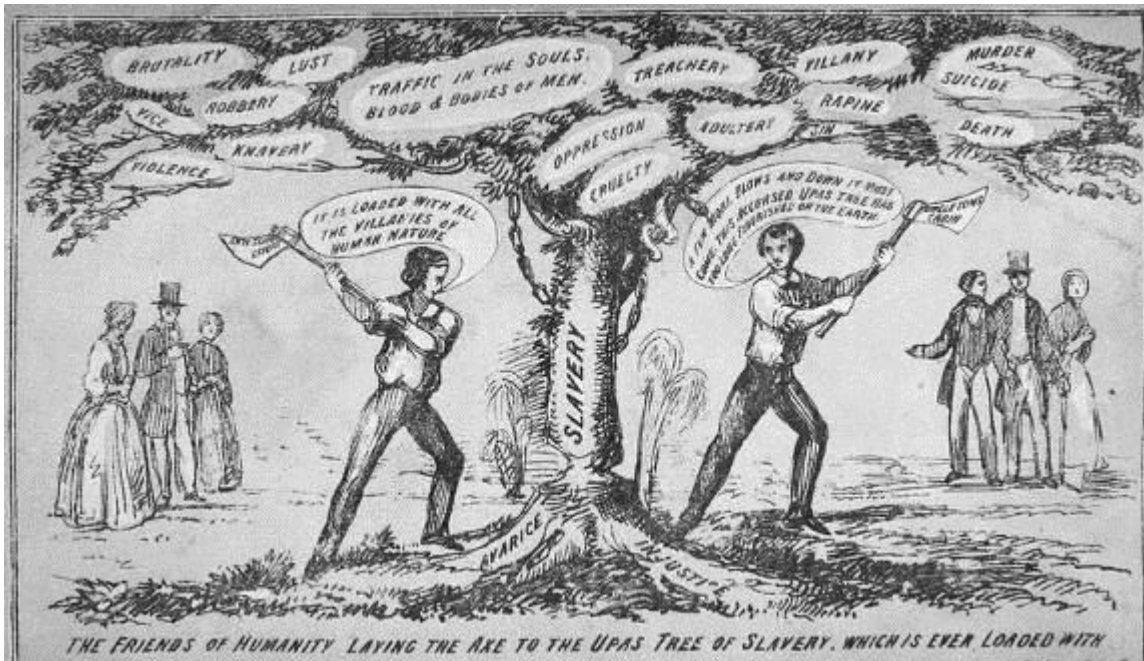
Deeply invested as Joaquin Pedroso was in the new economy, Chea's elopement could not help but be an affront, for beyond her refusal to marry within the sugarocracy she had chosen a man, Antonio Gonzalez de Mendoza, who was deeply opposed to slavery. Don Pedroso's commercial power rested on alliances with the colonial officials and strategic networks with other planters. Beyond all, however, it balanced on the increasingly treacherous footing of slavery.

Representative of most criollos, Don Joaquin and his new son-in-law resented colonial rule and aspired to see Cuba free. However, their opposition to colonialism was based on different values. While the older man would have gladly thrown off the Spanish yoke of taxation and trade control, he knew that Cuba's economic reliance on slavery meant that independence had to be forfeited. Ultimately, he could not envision an independent state for in his mind the inevitable collapse of slavery once the colonial army was pulled from the island would take-down with it the economic and social power of the oligarchy so destroying Cuban political identity.

Antonio Mendoza saw Cuba's dependence on slavery in stark moral terms as an extension of the colony's subservience to Spain, a degradation of man for greed and an impassible barrier to the values upon which nation's independence could rest. An erudite man, he belonged to a generation nurtured on the ideals of the Enlightenment and central to these was the belief in the rights of man. His position on colonialism and slavery was that it was nothing less than the negation of humanity.

Instead of outright independence, Antonio favored annexation of Cuba to the United States for he recognized that the deeply entrenched colonial tradition of using public office for private gain would impair the development of a democratic society. In short, while both men desired the progress and reform that would come from dissolving the ties to Spain, for Pedroso this prospect was intimately tied to his commercial interests while for Mendoza it was inextricable linked to humanistic values.

Between these two highly principled men, there was no prospect of a truce before the abolition of slavery was understood to be a historical inevitability. Don Joaquin would have naturally perceived Mendoza as an upstart and a representative of the new, reform-oriented Cuban man who was a danger to his life's work.



The friends of humanity laying the axe to the Upas tree of slavery, which is ever loaded with the sum of all villainies. (1853)
[New York Public Library Digital Gallery](#)

There is the acknowledgement of an economic quandary for the planter class in Don Joaquin's statement: *You don't own slaves but wait until Chea receives her inheritance and you will see how useful slavery is.* The slave economy was the foundation of the Cuban economy. In order for slavery to be legally phased out, as it was in the 1880's, the sugar industry had to evolve from its concentrated ownership by the elite criollo planters. The colonial government facilitated this transition with a system of land distribution designed to promote Spanish immigration. The goal was to install a middle-class of landowners and contracted growers to maintain the white majority power. The flood of ambitious immigrants altered the economic, social and cultural life of the island. Reflecting the new composition of the population, the paternal branch appears at this juncture in the family history.

The argument that persisted between the Don Joaquin and Antonio Mendoza was part of a larger conflict sweeping the island. It culminated in the wars of independence and drove Mendoza into exile between 1869 and 1873. These and the other two uprisings that marked the last two decades of the 19th century were grass-roots affairs, the product of decades of Cuban discontent under Spanish colonial rule.

In summary, Pedroso as a typical colonial used the circuitous and underground means available to a native Cuban to create and accumulate wealth. He was at the forefront of the "Sugar Revolution", accomplished by increasing the slave trade, industrializing the mills and laying railroads. This involved bribery for concessions relating to anything from the building of railways to the importation of slaves. (Don Joaquin Pedroso, at the time of his death, owned four sugar mills. Two hundred and eighty five slaves serviced Santa Gertrudis, the largest of these. The legal document that granted freedom to Pedroso's slaves in 1879 lists some that were not island-born and under the age of 59, thus proving that he had continued to buy slaves brought into the country illegally after 1820.²⁶ It required borrowing

²⁶ Gonzalez de Mendoza y Freyre, 1951. 60

money from Spanish and American merchants, bribing the Governor to ignore the illegal slave trade, and the suppression of slave revolts with cooperation from the Spanish military.

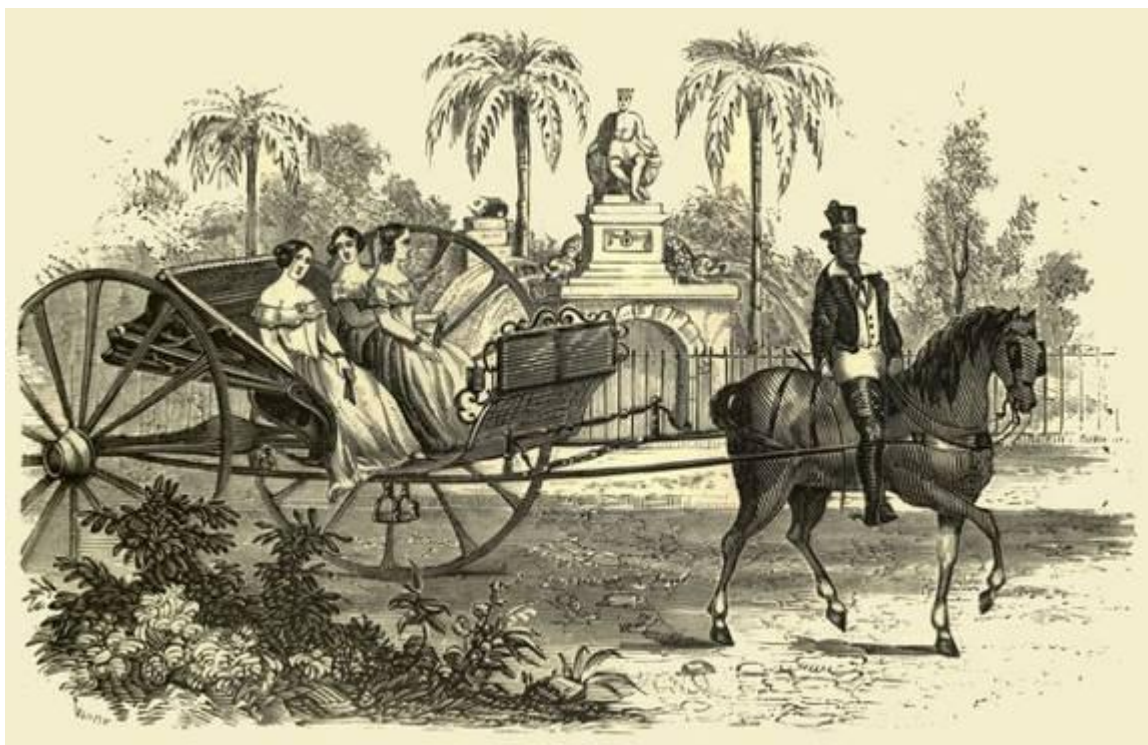
Joaquin and Luis Pedroso shifted the family commercial interests from trading to agriculture, reflecting the switch that occurred between the 18th and 19th centuries from Cuba's status in the Spanish empire from a place of commercial exchange to a world exporter of tropical agricultural product most notably sugar, tobacco and coffee. The newly wealthy criollos tolerated the Spanish military presence in return for protection of their investments thus subverting the popular pull towards independence and earning Cuba, the last colony of Spain, the title of "always faithful." However, within the circle of island society throughout the 19th century the call for "Cuba Libre" was more or less open as the regime of the day permitted. As the entrepreneurs began to dominate the world sugar trade with their newly industrialized sector in the first half of the 19th century the limitations of trade, imposed by the Spanish came to be a major irritant.

In contrast, Antonio Gonzalez de Mendoza belonged to the group of wealthy, well-educated progressives who opposed both slavery and colonial rule and worked for a transition to independence and a constitutional government. An abolitionist, he was a great admirer of Lincoln and believed that Cuba's future lay in annexation to the United States. During the late 1860's Mendoza was forced into exile along with other sympathizers and leaders of the independence. Dedicated to finding the means towards a more humane society he was part of a circle of men, notably Francisco Fésser, Nicolas Azcarate, Jose Manuel Mestre and Jose Ignacio Rodriguez, who shared his position and went on to take very active roles in laying the groundwork for an independent Cuba.

The rejection of an inheritance created through slave labor exemplified Antonio and Mercedes's opposition to slavery. In 1879, at a time when others desired independence but were not willing to liberate their slaves, they set an example by giving the three hundred-odd slaves that worked the family's most profitable sugar mill their freedom.

Antonio's relationship with his father-in-law embodies the conflict within criollo society that made the country's independence so hard-fought and long deferred. Despite the outward appearances of irreconcilable differences the two men were able to forge an alliance after Mendoza's return from exile in 1873 due to Pedroso's recognition of the social and political influence that his son in law had gained through his work as a lawyer and his association with the class of wealthy reformers who, thanks to reforms that ended the first war of independence (1868-1878) acquired some degree of power.

Both Pedroso and Mendoza were consummate patriarchs. The enormous colonial home that Don Joaquin designed to accommodate his children was passed-down to the next generation and in it continued the traditions and customs that had ruled domestic life in Havana for centuries. Amargura became a popularly known as a bulwark of stability as Cuban society collapsed in the turbulent and unhappy years between the wars of independence.



“A Cuban Volante in the Paseo” History of Cuba; or, Notes of a Traveller in the Tropics, by Maturin M. Ballou, 1854
[Project Gutenberge EBook History of Cuba](#)

Works Cited

Batista, Julia. "Fechas de Mi Vida" unpublished memoirs

Batista, Matilde. "Recuerdos de mi Vida" unpublished memoirs

Bergad, Garcia, Barcia. *The Cuban Slave Market, 1790-1880*, (Cambridge: The Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge, 1995)

Bondil, Nathalie. ed. *Cuba Art and History From 1868 to Today*, The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, catalogue for an exhibition produced by the museum in partnership with the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes and the Fototeca de Cuba in Havana. January 31 to June 8, 2008

Estrada, Alfredo José. *Havana, Autobiography of a City*. (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007)

Knight, Franklin W. "Origins of Wealth and the Sugar Revolution in Cuba" *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 57.2 (1977) 231-253.

García Hernández, A. "Don Antonio Gonzalez de Mendoza, Extracto de la Conferencia Pronunciada en el Colegio de Abogados de La Habana", April 17, 1942, reprinted in Gonzalez de Mendoza y Freyre, Luis, *Antonio Gonzalez de Mendoza y Bonilla 1828–1906, Su Vida y su Familia*. (Havana, 1951)
English translation <http://www.gonzalezdemendoza.com/AGdM%20Biography.htm> (accessed 24 June 2011)

Gonzalez Mendoza y Freyre, Luis. *Don Antonio Gonzalez de Mendoza y Bonilla 1828–1906, Su Vida y su Familia*. Havana, 1951

Thomas, Hugh. *Cuba, or, The Pursuit of Freedom*. Da Capo Press Inc., 1998 (re-print of original New York: 1977 edition)

Zanetti, Oscar, and García Alejandro. *Sugar & Railroads, A Cuban History, 1837-1959*. trans. Franklin W. Knight and Mary Todd. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1987)

Chapter 2 Colonial Havana, traffic and transformation

Facing the sea, just above excavated remains of Havana's old city wall is the Palacio de Pedroso. From its balcony on Cuba Street between Cuarteles and Peña Pobre, wealthy city official Mateo Pedroso kept track of the shipping traffic that was the lifeblood of the city. This prototypical *casa/almacen* (house/warehouse) had storage and offices on the ground floor, the *entresuelo* or the servants' dormitories in the low-ceilinged second floor, and the family's living quarters on the upper levels.



Palacio Pedroso, 2009 (photo, T. Casas)

On the outside, the building makes no flashy statement about the status of its owner; its plain appearance, a half-block length of white plastered stone with the indigo-blue wooden windows and balconies, makes it seem more *almacen* than *casa*. As such, it contrasts with the colonial palaces whose external arched stone columns give elegant measure to the plazas that are tucked further inside the colonial city. Once over the threshold and inside the patio however, the Palacio Pedroso reveals a hidden refinement. Its internal spaces unfold in rhythmic counterpoint of light and shadow, solidity and space. Plenty of light and air circulate within the massive walls thanks to columns and galleries, windows and doors. An inner stairwell connects one storey to another. Here, sunlight floods in from the patio as well as from the exterior through a brilliantly colored elliptical stained glass window. The magical effect of transience in the heart of a stone building hints at the Palacio's power to adapt to new conditions.



Palacio Pedroso, interior, 2009 (photo, T. Casas)

The Palacio de Pedroso has served, among other things, as a prison.²⁷ Nowadays, the galleries that hang over the central patio enable security guards to oversee the palaces' current activity as a shopping centre and restaurant. This lookout feature originally helped managers to supervise laborers, and many years after, wardens to monitor prisoners.

Pedroso was an important city official whose fortune in *pesos fuertes*, a currency whose value was fixed to gold bullion and guaranteed by the Crown, was derived from acting as intermediary between the Crown, its trans-Atlantic trade, and Cuban society.²⁸ By virtue of his position as *regidor perpetuo*, permanent town councilor, he was among the few criollos that could extend loans (at huge interest rates) for fellow islanders to establish their own plantations.²⁹

Mateo Pedroso obtained his original wealth from his commercial activity, rather than from his land grants.³⁰ His house today continues as a point of exchange between an imperial and an insular economy. At least twenty percent of Cuba's revenue comes from tourism, a sector that has a disproportionate importance for it brings into the government the contemporary equivalent of gold bullion—currencies whose value is fixed to that of the American dollar by the international monetary exchange.

²⁷ Late in the 19th century, the house served successively as Court, jail, and police headquarters. It became a tenement house in the 20th century and was later refurbished for its present role as a small shopping centre. http://www.cubaabsolutely.com/design/houses_mansion.htm (Accessed July 26, 2012)

²⁸ "...in Cuba, soldiers, imperial bureaucrats and members of the town councils were most favorably positioned to exploit trade. Metropolitan legislation failed to curb the practice of using public service for private gain." Knight, Franklin W. "Origins of Wealth and the Sugar Revolution in Cuba," *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 57.2 (1977) 237

²⁹ Thomas, 1998. 66

³⁰ Knight, 1977. 245

Known also as the *Palacio de Artesanía*, the compound is now a one-stop multi-store souvenir emporium. Inside, cigars, crafts, musical instruments, CDs, clothing and jewelry are sold under the authority of Habaguanex, the largest of the retail management companies in the city's historic core. The Palacio reflects Colonial Havana as much more than a designated historical precinct; it is a social-commercial-cultural venture under the administration of the Office of the Official Historian. This incorporated Colonial Havana returns the city to its history in strategic ways. The most notable of these is that the ancient port is again geared to servicing visitors.



Palacio Pedroso, interior, 2009 (photo, T. Casas)



Colonial Havana: Heritage Commodity/Living Community

The Palacio de Pedroso facade looms over the exposed archeological foundation of the city walls along with an ancient battery. This fortification, erected between the 17th and 18th centuries, kept the city safe

from pirates and invaders. It guaranteed Havana's pre-eminence as the essential service-stop for flotillas travelling between Spain and its American colonies. When the walls were completed in 1740, they held fifty six streets, one hundred and seventy nine blocks, five plazas (Catedral, Armas, Vieja, San Francisco and del Cristo), fourteen churches and convents, two hospitals, six military barracks, and one jail.³¹ Along the walls, nine bastions defined Havana's polygonal shape: La Punta anchored the northern end of the walled city and Paula guarded the southern end.³² Within this impregnable space are carved the still palpable passages and nodes of its long-ago inhabitants.



“Havana, Narrow Street” *Cuba and her People of Today*, Boston: Forbes-Lindsay: 1911, Illustration p. 109. [Cuba and Her People of Today](#)

In the mid-19th century, a Swedish traveller, Frederika Bremer, compared the city's interior to a thriving anthill with narrow tunnels negotiated by armies of ants.

The city has a most peculiar aspect. The houses are low, and for the most part of but one story, never above two; the streets are narrow, so that in many cases the linen cloth, which serves as a shade to the shops, is stretched over the street from one side to the other. The walls of houses, palaces, or towers are colored blue, yellow, green, or orange,

³¹ Joseph L. Scarpaci, Roberto Segre, Mario Coyula. *Havana Two Faces of the Antillean Metropolis*. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press. 2002) quoting Roberts 1953, 41

³² Coyula, Scarpaci and Segre, 2002. quoting Roberts 1953, 26

and frequently adorned with fresco-painting. The glare of the sunlight on white walls is feared, as injurious to the sight, and hence they are all tinted. No smoke is visible, nor yet a single chimney. Flat roofs are universal, with their parapets of stone or iron, and their urns with bronze flames. I cannot understand where the fires are, nor what becomes of the smoke. The atmosphere of the city is as clear as crystal. The narrow streets are not paved, and when it rains, as it has done in torrents for a couple of days, immense puddles and holes are the consequence, and when it dries again, a great deal of dust. Narrow causeways, scarcely wide enough for two persons to pass, line each side of the street, and along the streets rush about in all directions, and wind in and out, a sort of huge insect, with immense hind legs and a long proboscis, upon which stands a tall black horn, or tower-like elevation—so at least appeared to me at first the Cuban equipages or volantes, which constitute a kind of Havana carriage. If, however, you wish to take a clear survey, you will find that they resemble a species of cabriolet, but the two immense wheels are placed behind the body of the carriage, which rests upon springs between the wheels and the horses, and for the most part is supported by them. A postillion, who is always a negro in large, projecting riding-boots, is mounted upon the horse, which is considerably in advance of the carriage itself. This driver is called a calashero (sic), and both he and the horse are sometimes richly caparisoned with silver, often to the value of several thousand dollars. The whole equipage is of an unusual length, and reminds me of some queer kind of harry-long-legs.³³

Today, the colonial city is a UNESCO designated world heritage zone. Many of the tourists who pass through its streets may not know however that they are in a highly original social experiment. Governed by the Office of the Official Historian, a body that answers only to the highest authorities, Colonial Havana attempts to provide, within a Marxist country in its last gasp, an example of what might yet be positive about a state controlled economy. It represents a micro-society envisioned and produced through a master urban plan that goes beyond the restoration of the historical architecture to encompass most aspects of the rigidly separated visitors' and residents' services. The brainchild of über-planner and Official Historian, Eusebio Leal, Colonial Havana uses the capitalist power of cultural tourism to conserve the socialist ideals of the revolution.

Two key displays, a centrally located diorama and a camera oscura in another building are promoted as must-see orientation devices to the city. The camera oscura shows the views of the city from the centrally located tower as these are captured through a small aperture-window and reflected within the dark tower room. The diorama is a 1:1500 scale representation of Colonial Havana and its outlying regions. These two displays shape viewers' perception of what constitutes Colonial Havana. For through the optical magic of shifts of scale and transformation of the solid environment into ephemeral reflection, viewers are invited to enter into the outlook of the makers of the Master Plan who conceive Colonial Havana as artefact and laboratory, a utopia composed of both solid form and intangible realities, a site in a continual process of being tinkered with and traded as both image and experience.

³³ Bremer, Fredrika. 1801-1865. *The homes of the New world; impressions of America*. New York: Harper & Brothers. 1853



Diorama of Colonial Havana. [Habana a Vuelo de Pajaro](#)

The colonial city once protected from invasion by its fortifications is now just as neatly demarcated within the larger Cuban culture. Colonial Havana is a post-communist venture using capitalist measures to prop-up an under-privileged local community and its crumbling infrastructure. Its planners and managers conceived it as an open-air historic site with its own economic system, social planning and cultural initiatives all run under the imperative of reviving and maintaining the historic fabric that envelops it.³⁴ Colonial Havana spins its outer shell of restoration like a worm that uses its energy to create its cocoon in the secure knowledge that it provides for a transcendent future. However, while history may be on the side of this utopian experiment, time is decidedly not.

Traditional and Contemporary Circulation within Colonial Havana

Havana was designed around a fort leaving no room in its central plaza for the presence of a cathedral. Consequently, unlike its Spanish counterparts where a central plaza embodied central authority in its grouping of key religious and state buildings, here, the urban plan is polycentric. Important institutions and their activities are spread among the city's five squares. Plaza de Armas was the hub of military and other official administration, Plaza de la Catedral focused church and its related institutions and Plaza Vieja and Plaza de San Francisco were devoted to commercial activity. This plan guaranteed constant movement and mixing of diverse population elements through tunnel-like streets, built narrow as protection from invasion and covered with awnings to conserve cool temperatures.

The movement in the walled city was not only between one plaza and another but also to and from the gates during the hours they remained open. Within the city private and public spaces, upper and lower class living quarters overlapped in a way that astounded visitors. Samuel Hazard wrote in 1873, "People of the best class live here there everywhere,—some up stairs and some down, some in warehouses, and other over warehouses and stores."³⁵ This compression of human as well as animal life, for the larger homes stabled horses in the ground floor made regular escape an urgent physical and mental need. The *extramuros* (outside the walls) spaces offered relief from the congestion. Just as important, they were designed as stages where the city's social hierarchy, entangled by the proximity of life inside the walls, could be affirmed through the rituals of elegant assembly.

³⁴ The Office of the Official Historian's guide to the operations is titled: *Desafío de una utopía: una estrategia integral para la gestión de salvaguardia de La Habana Vieja* (Challenge of a Utopia: a comprehensive strategy for the management of safeguarding of Colonial Havana)

³⁵ Hazard, Samuel, [Cuba with Pen and Pencil](#) (accessed June 14, 2011).



interior mural copied from 1855 lithograph by Federico Miahle, Museo de la Orfebrería in Colonial Havana showing Monserrate city gates and extramuro activity, 2009 (photo: T. Casas)

The restoration program of Colonial Havana is financed through museum admission fees and profits of hotels, restaurants and souvenir shops. To guarantee that dollars will be shed in buildings that might otherwise be hard to find, a series of printed guides titled “Andar” (Stroll), from The Office of the Official Historian, outlines pedestrian routes through the district. Like the city’s long-ago residents, tourists circulate from one restored plaza to another through the most renovated streets and then to the promenades that mark the edges of the zone.³⁶

³⁶ This strategy is outlined in *Desafío de una utopía* “In order of priority, concentrate the available resources for rehabilitation in areas of historical prestige, great interest, and capable of creating an impact on the overall results. Complement these interventions with various others within the marked territory, as centres stimulating the dynamics of the general process.” p.101



Desafío de una utopía: una estrategia integral para la gestión de salvaguardia de La Habana Vieja. Map of Planned Hubs to draw pedestrians across the breadth of Colonial Havana 's restored districts

The residents of Colonial Havana intersect with but do not intermingle with the passing tourists. Commercial solicitation of tourists by Cubans is illegal. The worlds of the two populations are self-contained.³⁷ The locals' *agros* (fresh produce markets) are located in walled vacant lots; the outlets for the rationed food and peso bars serving low quality alcohol are un-marked and tucked-into the urban fabric. Without a vital commercial function for locals, the plazas are only marginally public. By economic necessity, the open-air museum prevails over the use of the same space for contemporary Cuban life. Havana's nature as a city of immaterial internal social barriers and protective defenses against invaders extends back through the centuries.

³⁷ D. Medina Lasansky in *Architecture and Tourism, perception, performance and place* has pointed out the irony that, given the barring, until recently, of Cubans into Habaguanex restaurants and hotels, "the hotels' amenities and colonial-themed containers serve as a form of neocolonialist exploitation in a postcolonial era." Lasansky, D. Medina and McLaren, Brian editors, *Architecture and Tourism, perception, performance and place*. New York: Berg, 2004. 178

City Renaissance, the 1830s, Wealth and the Ascendancy of Criollo Society

In 1762, the English breached the city walls in a successful attack on the city. Mateo Pedroso, as a member of the town council, was among those who reluctantly submitted to the invaders. The occupation, although brief, brought a cosmopolitan air to the city by opening it fully to international trade. Pedroso was a member of La Real Sociedad Patriótica³⁸ established in Cuba in 1793, a form of think-tank of the criollo powerful with money for travel and research; their mandate was to spearhead the economic and intellectual development of the island within the limits of its subservience to the Crown. Mateo Pedroso who had travelled to England to study railways could not have helped but admire the entrepreneurial muscle of that nation. Although harbor defenses were re-designed after the Spanish recapture of Havana, the brief freedom from the restrictive Spanish trade laws had left residents with an appetite for greater contact with the world.

Mateo Pedroso's industrialist grandson, Joaquín was in his thirties when Havana's infrastructure and public spaces were re-designed to reflect the latest European trends. This included a new system of drains, a dredging of the port, the erection of more entrance gates to the city, and the installation of street lighting and paving on select streets. The new 1830's plan reflected the city's transition from military fortification and provisioning outpost to urban centre of a booming island economy. The colonial administrator, Captain General Tacón, set out to broaden the perspective of colonials living within pinched confines of the old walled city. He oversaw the creation of boulevards for spectacular military parade. These provided that sweeping vistas anchored by monuments that celebrated the sovereignty of Spain,³⁹ Beyond this colonial program, the new spaces proved the ideal place to celebrate the city's own social life. The most popular new feature was a tree-lined boulevard, Paseo Isabela, or the "Prado" as it became known, supported a vital urban scene.

The Havana of the 1830's in which Joaquin Pedroso and Micaela Montalvo lived after they married in 1820, was in the midst of a cultural renaissance that was only partly the result of Captain General Tacón's public works. It was *the* place of residence for most Cubans of means. Most wealthy tobacco and sugar planters limited the time on their plantations to the harvest period from December to April. They, along with the cattle breeders and merchants were at the top of criollo society. Below them were small landowners, administrators of plantations, lawyers and skilled tradesmen. On the next rung were wage earners, including freed slaves and last, of course, were the slaves. With its large, wealthy pool of patrons, Havana was an artistic incubator not only for musicians and writers but for artisans. Freed slaves and poor whites could ascend to new social heights once they became celebrated masters of their craft. The city's dense core with its architecture and integrated wood, wrought iron and stained glass art is the legacy of this period.

A growing interest in Cuban expression fueled city culture. With the repression of political dissent, patriot sentiment circulated through the arts in salons, concerts and balls. The works of exiled poet José Maria Heredia was cherished by the criollo planter society even as it deferred to Spanish titles and European fashion. A series of French lithography studios, endorsed by a cultural and economic

³⁸ Later called Sociedad Económica de Amigos del País.

³⁹ "Governor Miguel Tacón's main charge from 1834 to 1838 was to keep Cuba a Spanish colony, and improving Cuba's economy and image was one way to achieve that goal. Tacón wished to make Havana a symbol of urban modernity, which at the time was identified with neoclassicism. This modern drive embraced sobriety, order, righteousness, straight avenues, and open spaces for the new middle class." p. 32. Scarpaci, Segre and Coyula

development agency *La Real Sociedad Patriótica* (The Royal Patriotic Society), printed and sold landscapes of the island's mills, rustic scenes and Havana streetscapes for a ready market. These were promoted as emblems of the rich cultural life and natural resources of the island.⁴⁰ Federico Miahle, who was among the most celebrated of these lithography artists, on arriving from France in the late 1830's began his Cuban production with a series in which scenes of Havana figured prominently.⁴¹



⁴⁰ Zoila Lapique Becali in her authoritative survey of the history of Cuban lithography establishes 1822 as the date of the first working lithography studio on the island. It was located on the corner of Compostela and Amargura streets and its owner was Santiago Lessieur. Among his first commissions was sheet music for Havana musical societies requiring copies of scores by Cuban musicians.p.23

⁴¹ Zoila Lapique cites an 1839 advertisement for a fresh series of lithographs by Moreau and Miahle revealing the "picturesque treasures" of the island's interior: "La isla de Cuba, tan rica de bellas perspectivas, es hasta ahora, por decirlo así, desconocida a los amantes de las bellezas de la naturaleza: los sabios de la Europa misma, con los ojos vueltos a la gran Antilla, piden se les manifiesten las maravillas que no se conocen mas allá de sus fértiles llanuras, ocultas detrás de sus cimas escabrosas cubiertas de bosques eternos... es tiempo de que Cuba ocupe ya su lugar en la admiración del mundo, descubriéndole sus tesoros pintorescos que en si encierra..." p.67

To view digital reproductions of these Miahle lithographs:, [Isla de Cuba Pintoresca 1830-1840](#)

Miahle, Federico, Puertas de Monserrate, 1855 (cropped) [George Glazer Prints](#)



The cross on the facade of Nuestra Señora de la Merced is visible in the background of Federico Miahle's "Alameda de Paula" *Isla de Cuba Pintoresca*, 1839, lithographs, Picture 2 [University of Miami Cuban Heritage Collection Books](#)

Before the Paseo Isabel, the place to be seen in the late 18th and early 19th century, was the Alameda de Paula, a tree-lined raised promenade along the bay side of the city walls between the Teatro Principal theatre and the hospice and church of San Francisco de Paula. It was a long narrow parapet over the bay, its length marked by streetlights framed by shade trees. The neighborhood around the Alameda de Paula became fashionable for adding to its importance as meeting ground for society; it was close to the church and convent of Nuestra Señora de la Merced on Cuba Street just north of Paula. This church attracted the most wealthy city residents on the important religious holidays and it had a special significance for the Pedroso Montalvo family.

Havana—religious cross-road: Catholicism and Santería

In 1855 Micaela Montalvo resided at number 10 Paula Street.⁴² She was a devout parishioner of Nuestra Señora de la Merced, the church around the corner; accordingly, she left enough money in her

⁴² "Mis abuelos maternos fueron Joaquín Pedroso y Echevarria y Micaela Montalvo y Castillo que Vivian al casarse mis padres, en la calle de Paula no. 10 que luego heredé yo, junto con Ramón; pero la vendimos más tarde." (My maternal grandparents were Joaquin Pedroso Echevarria and Micaela Montalvo Castillo who, when my parents were married, lived at no. 10 Paula Street that I later inherited with my brother Ramon; but we later sold.) Julia Batista

will so that one of her female descendants would continue to provide deluxe candles and silk flowers for the altar of this church during Holy Week.⁴³



⁴³ “I am not sure whether it was Doña Micaela Montalvo Nuñez del Castillo or someone before she who had left a legacy to the Church de la Merced that was administered by the eldest daughter of her descendants. The goal was to cover the costs of the candles, decoration of the altar on the week that the Circular was in the church that in those days was the most beautiful and well attended in Havana.” Matilde Batista (*trans. the author*)



Entrance, main altar, and entrance altar, Nuestra Señora de la Merced, 2009 (photo, T. Casas)

Two centuries later, the same Nuestra Señora de la Merced presides in the church. The Virgin is now also openly worshiped as Obatalá by the followers of Santería, the Afro-Cuban religion that slaves developed to hide their Yoruba spirituality under the guise of Catholic worship. Obatalá is father of four other Orishas as well as of all humanity. In Santería, Orishas are the intermediaries between the people and Oludumare, the supreme God. Obatalá can be both male and female, a force that unifies a duality or diversity; s/he is symbolically associated with white, a color that contains all others within it.

While the Catholic Church in Cuba does not officially condone the use of its churches for Santería worship, it is recognized as a deeply rooted cultural phenomenon and so accepted as inevitable.⁴⁴ Like the city that surrounds it, the church of Nuestra Señora de la Merced embraces two worlds. Within its walls Catholicism and Santería coexist but remain fundamentally separate one from the other. Parishioners of both faiths sit side by side on the pews and together light candles under the same statues. However, while here the coexistence of divergent belief systems is a happy one, outside in the larger Colonial Havana life within contradictory systems is more stressful.

Cultural Nationalism: Cecilia Valdez, Mestizaje and Cubanidad

The theme of *mestizaje* the intertwined racial identity as a touchstone of Cuban national culture has deep roots. It is explored in the novel, *Cecilia Valdés*, within the story of Havana itself in a precisely drawn picture of the city at an important historical juncture. Written in 1839 by Cirilo Villaverde with the original edition containing illustrations by Federico Miahle, the story is set in and expressed through the particulars of the city.

⁴⁴ Gustavo Andujar, who heads *Signis*, a cultural organization within the Cuban Catholic Church, in speaking of this interdependence pointed out that Santeria worshippers' need the Catholic Church to receive such a sacrament as Baptism as an essential step to becoming a priest or Babalawo. (conversation with author, Havana, 2009)

In the 19th century, Havana's new class of mixed-race artisans living and working in the vibrant criollo society achieved an unprecedented level of skill and originality in their production. Adapting and at times surpassing European design standards in the range of products demanded by elegant society—fashion, furniture, stained glass windows, fans, wrought iron and wooden architectural elements, these artists created the setting for the rich drama of Havana life. In today's Colonial Havana, a program to train residents to carry on these traditional crafts creates employment and the skilled labor to meet the restoration goals of the Official Plan.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ The Sisterhood of Knitters and Embroiderers, *Hermanidad de Tejedoras y Bordadoras*, is one curious example of these guilds. Founded by The Office of the Official Historian in 1994, it set out to revive the needle arts, an undervalued and dying form of cultural heritage. Based in a house on Oficios street the program not only produces crochet, lace and other form of needlework items for the tourist market but also has an extension program to teach children of both genders basic needlework, as well as “moral education, etiquette and the language of the fan.” “Tejer, bordar y...cantar” *Opus Habana*. 8 April 2005. Web. 22 June 22, 2011. [Hermanidad de Tejedoras Y Bordadoras](#)



Eduardo (Eddy) Casas on the Alameda de Paula, 2009 (photo, T. Casas)

The setting for Cecilia Valdés is this spawning of an urban culture rich in categories of people within an increasingly flexible hierarchy of power, wealth and influence. A centrally located promenade laid out by Tacón, was ideally suited for display and mutual recognition of one's place and role within this social tapestry. While the narrowness of the Alameda de Paula required visitors to dismount or descend from their carriage, the excitement of the Prado was kinetic. The dashing volantes offered an impressionistic effect to the spectators on foot. Cirilo Villaverde describes the scene in his archetypal novel.



Garneray, Hyppolite Jean-Baptiste, Vista del Paseo extramuros de la Habana (1830), [New York Public Library Digital Image Gallery](#)

The new Prado was approximately a mile long, passing at an almost imperceptible 80-degree angle in front of the small plaza in which the rustic Neptune Fountain stood. El Prado consisted of four rows of trees commonly found in the woodlands of Cuba, some of them so old they were big around and bulky, and all of them inappropriate for a promenade. On the avenue down the middle, the widest one, there was room for four carriages abreast; the two narrower avenues running down either side of the main one, with a few stone seats here and there, were for the use of people on foot, that is to say men only, who on gala occasions or feast days formed endless lines that stretched along the entire length of the promenade. The majority of them, particularly on Sundays, were Spanish lads employed in the city's retail shops or in government offices, and soldiers and sailors being bachelors and working in poorly paid occupations they could not afford a carriage of their own or hire one to visit El Prado, and if a foreigner set foot on it out of ignorance of the regulation that it was the side avenues that were reserved for pedestrians or without the consent of the sergeant of the small detachment of dragoons standing guard there, he called attention to himself and aroused the public's laughter.

Cuban or Creole young people considered it beneath their dignity to go to El Prado on foot, and above all to mingle with Spaniards in the lines of Sunday gawkers. As a result only the elite took an active part in the day's promenade; the women invariably in light gigs, a number of elderly individuals in volantes and certain young people from rich families on horseback....The entertainment was limited to riding around the statue of

Charles III and the Neptune Fountain when the crowd was small and when it was large the promenade stretched to the Lion Fountain or to some point between the two ...⁴⁶



Vista del Paseo extramuros de la Habana, detail, [University of Miami Cuban Heritage Collection](#)

Villaverde invokes the city, its class, cultural and racial tensions by using the details of its built spaces, social life and characters as the source of the drama. The restless exploration of the city by the two central characters, individuals of disparate race and class, lays the groundwork for a tragedy. Their romance is facilitated through Havana's underground nightlife centred in the *cunas* semi-private dances. At these events white men could mingle with mixed race and black women, enjoying spirited music and unbridled dancing as a counterpoint to their own elegant and restrained assemblies.⁴⁷ In Cirilo Villaverde's novel the *cuna* is a form of worm hole allowing white males and mixed-race and black females to temporarily break-through the rigid social structure into a dimension of license and possibility.

The plot focuses on the son of a Spanish merchant and Cecilia Valdés, a beautiful *mulata*. The two fall in love not realizing that she is the daughter of the young man's father and a domestic slave. The work dramatizes the cross-racial sexual attraction as a natural outcome of the closeness between members of different races and class in the homes and streets of colonial Havana. The fact that the romance goes against the incest taboo frames the story as a morality tale on the tragic consequences of ignoring the existence of forbidden desire.² Denied, the desire becomes a powerful and insidious force in the

⁴⁶ Villaverde, Cirilo. *Cecilia Valdés, or, Angel Hill*. Translated from Spanish by Helen Lane; Edited with an introduction and notes by Sybille Fischer. (New York: Oxford UP. 2004) 130

⁴⁷ These dances were a notable feature of the city Samuel Hazard, author of the 1871 *Cuba -with Pen and Pencil*, refers discreetly to a ball watched in the assembly room of the Café Es. "They are dancing their favorite Cuban dance, the danza" he writes, "pretty enough and proper enough when danced with fair women and proper men; but as danced here, one of the most indecent spectacles I have ever seen at any public ball. A Cuban contemporary, moreover, spoke of the "infernally chattering" of the music that never ceased for a moment, the "satyr-like delirium" of the movements in which the women assumed the active part and the men the passive." (Roberts:104)

proximity and intimacy of domestic and public space within the ancient city. The character of Cecilia, within this symbolic equation, represents the *mestizaje*, the cross-racial product that came to be known as Cuban culture in its essence. The city of Havana by extension, its streets, squares and buildings, was the organic incubation chamber and creative studio of this identity.

“Tourist Apartheid” and the spectacle of Colonial Havana

Another order of exchange, equally conflictive and rich occurs in the streets of the colonial city today. For many years before and after Castro’s revolution the former aristocratic mansions became shoddily converted multi-residence buildings known as *solares*. With their restoration under the comprehensive plan of Official Historian the now resplendent facades are also part of a visually coordinated tourist development that critics have derisive nickname “Havanaland” for its overtly formulated and copiously signaged atmosphere. The inhabitants of the solares, many still falling apart, live alongside the pristine, restored buildings; these discordant human and architectural elements are on display for the thousands of tourists that drift through daily. The filigree of the wrought iron fences that in colonial times separated but gave transparency and ultimately an interpenetration of the worlds of the blacks and whites, rich and poor, men and women, now separate tourist from resident. The places that permit the form of exchanges between haves and have-nots, the equivalent of the ancient *cunas*, are the Malecon, the bars and the dark streets where the *jineteras* (hustlers) and sexual tourists negotiate their transactions. The residents’ officially enforced separation from the tourists is in reality a discrete interdependence facilitated through cellphone networks and former extramuros spaces that now serve for cruising.



Barred Windows, Residence in Havana, 1900-1910, (detail) [University of Miami Cuban Heritage Collection](#)

J.B. Jackson, the pioneering American landscape historian, argued that ruins play a key role in orienting a society to its present. Writing in a postwar period when monuments and historic sites in the United States were going up at a feverish pace he observed that the evolution of a public history happens in three steps: first, a period of oblivion in which historical structures are left to decay. Second,

thinking about it as “the good old days”, and third, in which the past is rediscovered and reconstructed according to the needs of the present.⁴⁸

In the glossy manual documenting the goals of his Office, *Desafío de una Utopía, The Challenge of an Utopía*, Eusebio Leal states that a central goal is to dignify residents’ underprivileged existence by having them identify with and feel pride in the historical beauty of their built environment. In the restoration project of Colonial Havana the ideal is to balance on the one hand the responsibility to foreign visitors who will bring hard currency to the faltering economy and on the other to residents who must forge a meaningful connection to a marketable but remote past. Inside the colonial core there are no images of Fidel or Che and few references to the revolution. For Cuba, outside the domain of The Office of the Official Historian, using the colonial period as a primary reference for civic identity would be anathema.

For the locals, a vital connection with the historic zone rests on their grasp of how the underground and the official economic activity intertwine and feed off each other. In essence, they must reconcile the disorganization and corruption that is endemic to Cuban life with the external polish and internally regulated economic space of this open-air museum.

The appeal of history undoubtedly pales in comparison to the value of the restoration program as a source of employment and infrastructure improvement. Tour guides, guards and other service staff come from the district. Initiatives such as training and employment in historic handiwork such as carpentry, embroidery and weaving keep local residents busy while serving to supply the needs of the restoration program. Children, located in “museum schools” in the heart of the restored area, enjoy the facilities of the area instead of run-down equivalents in other areas of the city.⁴⁹

The restored facades of highly valued heritage buildings offer dramatic contrasts with the nearby disintegrating homes. The official plan outlines the step-by-step program for addressing the miserable living conditions in the sub-divided densely populated former colonial mansions. Precedence is given to the race-against-time rehabilitation of the most historically valuable properties. Meanwhile the pace for literally re-wiring the old city so that it works on par with the well-serviced hotels and restaurants is painfully slow. At the margins of the renovated Colonial Havana, tired, decayed Havana is clearly visible and stark in contrast.

⁴⁸ Jackson, John Brinckerhoff. *The Necessity for Ruins, and Other Topics*. (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press. 1980) 98

⁴⁹ *Desafío de una utopía*. p. 61



entrance interior colonial house, Havana, photo T. Casas

Seeing residents in the colorful costumes of historical character types as they pose for tips before cameras a cynical viewer might judge Colonial Havana to be a theatre set for cultural tourism to which the local inhabitants officially and unofficially provide the live drama. Nonetheless, two buildings, key to the Pedroso-Gonzalez de Mendoza family history, namely the *Palacio Pedroso/Palacio de Artesanía* and the Church of Nuestra Señora de la Merced tell the larger story. In the former's history of adaptation and the latter's reality as an intersection of separate worlds they are monuments to the hybrid transformative society that Havana has always been. Just as in the world of Cecilia Valdés where discrete, labyrinthine routes connected people through the rigid barriers of race, class and gender their equivalents exist now to connect the worlds of tourist and resident. Ultimately, the creative coexistence of black-market enterprise and state-endorsed economic commerce is much like the other contradictions and paradoxes that historically have given the city its unique vitality. The Special Period with its ruined economy calls for desperate measures and in the twisted setting that is Colonial Havana, danger or romance, profit or ruin lurk just around the corner. Here, exchanges between the past and present, restored and ruined, pesos and dollars are negotiated on a daily basis with flare and faith in tomorrow. Throughout the serene beauty of the city-museum the tour guides, hangers-on and jineteros dart like small fish in this coral reef of material ruin, official animation and underground economy.



Works Cited

- Batista, Julia. "Fechas de Mi Vida" unpublished memoires
- Batista, Matilde. "Recuerdos de mi Vida" unpublished memoires
- Bremer, Fredrika. 1801-1865. *The homes of the New world; impressions of America*. New York: Harper & Brothers.1853 [The Homes of the New World: impressions of America](#)
- Hazard, Samuel. *Cuba with Pen and Pencil*. London: Sampson, Low, Marston Low and Searle,1873 [Cuba with Pen and Pencil](#) (accessed. 13 June 2011.)
- Jackson, John Brinckerhoff. *The Necessity for Ruins, and Other Topics*, (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press. 1980)
- Knight, Franklin W. "Origins of Wealth and the Sugar Revolution in Cuba," *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 57.2 (1977) 231-253
- Lapique, Zoila Becali. *La Memoria en las Piedras*. (Havana: Ediciones Boloña. 2002)
- Lasansky, D. Medina and Brian McLaren, eds, *Architecture and Tourism, perception, performance and place*. (New York: Berg, 2004), p.178
- Ochoa Aloma, Alina. *Desafío de una utopía: una estrategia integral para la gestión de salvaguardia de La Habana Vieja*. (Havana: Ediciones Boloña. 2002)
- Joseph L. Scarpaci, Roberto Segre, Mario Coyula. *Havana Two Faces of the Antillean Metropolis*. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press. 2002)
- Villaverde, Cirilo. *Cecilia Valdés, or, Angel Hill*. Translated from Spanish by Helen Lane; Edited with an introduction and notes by Sybille Fischer. (New York: Oxford UP. 2004)

Chapter 3 Chea: Silver and Sackcloth, Protest and Purification

On the morning of the 25th of March, 1855 the nineteen year old Mercedes “Chea,” Pedroso discretely stepped out into one of the narrow streets of Havana. She walked to the home of her friends, the Fésser family, where she dressed in new clothes and was driven in their carriage to a church. With each step Chea was conscious that she was removing herself irrevocably from her former life. Although the union had been expressly forbidden by her father, that morning she married Antonio Gonzalez de Mendoza.

Antonio had been denounced by Joaquin Pedroso as her social inferior. He was twenty-seven years old, an emerging lawyer preparing also to teach at the university. His social ease, sharp mind and intellectual curiosity had made him welcome among the men of the criollo elite who met to discuss and trade the books banned by the colonial administration. Perhaps he met Chea through having made the acquaintance of her older brother Manuel while they were both studying in Madrid.⁵⁰ For Chea, Antonio embodied education, culture and moral development, values in direct opposition to her father’s slavery-dependent materialism. With her marriage the nineteen year old woman confidently set herself on a life-long path of moral awareness and action.



Chea, (Mercedes Pedroso de Mendoza (1835-1895)

In the two portraits of Chea in our family album, she appears as a delicate woman with a high forehead, close-set eyes and a long narrow nose. The arch of her eyebrows emphasizes her deep-seated eyes

⁵⁰ “On the third year of his Law studies Mendoza transferred to the University of Madrid where he attended for one year.” <http://www.gonzalezdemendoza.com/AGdM%20Biography.htm> (Accessed. 15 June 2011)

giving her a look of permanent concentration. This sober expression is softened by full lips that in the later of the two portraits curve slightly upwards.

Elopement, friends, early married life, death of three of their first six children

The new couple lived with the Gonzalez de Mendoza parents on Salud Street just outside the city walls. There, Miguel was born in 1856, Gil Maria and Isidoro who both died in infancy in the following years, and Julia in 1860. The births of Claudio and Maria Luisa followed but the latter died at the age of four.⁵¹ The youngster's funeral was her sister Julia's first memory. The funeral procession, an exclusively male ritual according to custom, wound its way to the Espada cemetery from San Ignacio Street where the family was now installed in its first home. There, Chea also gave birth to Maria Antonia, Felicia, Victor and Rosa.

The outbreak of the first war of independence in 1868 forced Antonio and Chea to leave the country the following year to escape the military reprisals against those sympathetic to the cause. Francisco Fésser, Nicolas Azcarate and Jose Manuel Mestre who, along with their wives made up their close circle of like-minded friends, also fled the country. This, the first of the family's series of exiles, was to last four years.



Chea ca. 1863 Julia on her right Miguel on her left

What we know of Mercedes Pedroso comes from Julia her eldest daughter and, *her* eldest daughter Matilde. That the two were deeply influenced by Chea is seen in the importance given to her exploits in both women's records of the family. While Matilde's reminiscences relate the lives of Antonio and

⁵¹ in Marianao, now a suburb of Havana, where the family was summering

Julia through stories by their children and grandchildren that had already enshrined them, Julia's "Fechas de Mi Vida," is sparsely written, practically a list of the births, illnesses, weddings and deaths that shaped her life. The only passage in the book in which she allows herself more descriptive and subjective writing deals with the family's travel and life in exile between 1869 and 1873.

Exile in New York and Europe, importance of foreign languages and cultural education

Although the majority of Cuban families stayed in New York during their exile, Antonio and Chea chose to travel in Europe after spending a year in New York, using Madrid as their home base. That Julia gave great significance to this encounter with the larger world is revealed in her inclusion of fragmentary memories of her stays in Geneva, the Swiss Alps and in the fashionable planned neighbourhood of Salamanca in Madrid. European travel offered a window of freedom for girls as much as for women whose lives, when at home, were closely bound by obligations to family, church and charity.

Julia was the product of her mother's un-indulgent upbringing. Chea did not tolerate idleness and taught her daughters to use their hands in the mending of clothing, the saying of their rosaries while she involved them in the routines of the parish and the household. Aware of the importance of education and especially appreciative of foreign languages, she enrolled her children in a Kindergarten-style of primary school run by a Swedish woman, Beatriz Bollag⁵² Beatriz taught using blocks and toys and asked the children to call her by her given name. Eliza Moore Ripley, a refugee from the South during the American Civil War who lived across the street and sent her own children to the Kindergarten during the 1860's at the time of Julia's attendance, described it in detail.

Henry's school was an endless source of interest. Señora Bollag (sic) (the children all called her Beatriz) kept the school in her own bedroom, although she occupied an entire house. In the very early morning the pupils began to assemble. Before the sun was fairly up, *volantes* arrived at Beatriz's door, and sable maids deposited their little white-frocked charges, and the *volantes* drove off. Boys in panama hats, and full suits of spotless white linen from tip to toe, their piercing eyes and coal-black hair giving the only touch of what the artist calls character to the picture, rode up on ponies with white-robed attendants; and so, long before our American hours for breakfast, Beatriz's school was under full headway. I could distinctly hear the murmur of voices, varied by Beatriz's sharp reproof, and the patter of little feet on the uncovered floor. About ten o'clock *volantes* and servants on foot with breakfast-trays began to appear. In the order of their arrival the children retired to a rustic bower in the back yard where there was a rude table surrounded by a bench; there, with a snowy spread of napkins, they ate breakfast, with servants to replenish the claret-glasses, and break the eggs over the rice, spread the fried bananas over the *tasajo* or other meat arrangement; in short, perform such menial service as was required by all well-bred children in that voluptuous land. One by one they went to *almuerza*, (sic) and returned to lessons smacking their lips and picking their little teeth. Waiters and *volantes* severally vanished with empty dishes and trays. At two o'clock servants were seen crossing the street from up, down, and directly

⁵² Julia had attended primary school in Havana before the family's period in exile. "Despues, recuerdo, que ibamos Claudio y yo, en coche, todos los dias al Tulipan, a casa de Beatriz Bollag que creo que era Sueca. Alli aprendi bien el inglés, pues ya lo hablaba, cuando emigramos en Febrero de 1869 para Nueva York." Julia Batista, unpublished memoirs. 6

opposite, with napkin-covered glasses of *refresco*, made of orange, pineapple, tamarind, or the expressed juice of blanched almonds, for the thirsty little ones, who lived near enough to share refreshments with their mammas.⁵³

Under Beatriz's instruction the eldest Gonzalez de Mendoza children learned to speak English before they left Havana for New York in 1869. During the year that they lived in the American city they attended a neighbouring school. The family then moved to Madrid and after the birth of Ramon in 1871, they travelled from Switzerland to Germany staying in Hamburg for the winter where the children were taught by a German governess, Fraulein Reidel.

On receiving the news of shootings in Havana Antonio was advised by friends to remain abroad. After a year of being in Germany they returned to Madrid in April 1872 where the last of Chea's children, Pablo, was born. The following year they returned to Havana after four years of exile.

Foundation of the Sacred Heart School in Havana; Schools and vaccination; Plague in the Sacred Heart School

Women and men in nineteenth century Havana occupied radically separate worlds. For girls of Chea's class, education outside the home did not exist and within the home was severely restricted. Once she became a mother, she took full advantage of the school for girls that had been founded in 1858 by the nuns of the Sacred Heart. The religious order whose convent and school, Manhattanville, in Harrison, New York had been founded ten years before, responded to a request by the wealthy families of Havana to establish a school in their city. After their Havana landing in January of that year the advance party was treated to a warm and very public welcome headed by the Captain General. The Spanish administrators supported the nuns not only to ingratiate themselves to the criollo elite but also because the nun's presence enhanced civic life for this religious order specialised in training wealthy girls to a life-long dedication to the needy. The sisters were taken to a house, Prado #74 where their every need had been anticipated: they were met with an abundance of flowers, books of piety on the night tables and even several instruments of penance.⁵⁴

In 1873, freshly returned from exile, Chea enrolled her four daughters in the Sacred Heart School, at the corner of Calzada del Monte and Buenos Aires streets in the El Cerro suburban district. She was permitted only one, Sunday afternoon, weekly visit. Although Havana families had wanted a day school for their girls, the sisters insisted that the scope of their educational work demanded that students live within the school.⁵⁵ From all parts of the island girls were sent to the institution that was housed in three former mansions. Tragedy struck in 1878 when an outbreak of *fiebre perniciosa* (fever) broke out during the disease-prevalent summer months. Chea's adolescent daughter was one of the victims.⁵⁶ El Cerro had a notoriously foul stream that ran through the gardens of even its most elegant

⁵³ Ripley, Eliza Moore. *From Flag To Flag*, pp. 145-6

⁵⁴ Perez, Raquel. "The founding of the Society of the Sacred Heart in Cuba." [Sacred Heart in Cuba](#) (accessed. 15 June 2011).

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ "El 15 de Junio de 1878 murió Rosa de una fiebre perniciosa que le dio estando en el colegio y Mama quedo tan delicada que Papa nos llevo de pasar el verano al Norte en Alexandria Bay en Thousand Islands; y luego volvió solo a la Habana y nos dejo instalados en una casa en la misma calle 23 donde habiamos vivido 10 años antes pues todavia vivia alli la familia de Mestre, cuyos hijos eran muy amigos nuestros." J. Batista (The 15 of June of 1878 Rosa died from a pernicious fever that

homes. Eliza Moore wrote of it with some horror as the source of noise and pollution in her own backyard:

At the foot of this yard was a rushing, tearing, noisy stream of water—perhaps six feet wide—that made as much tumult and transacted as much business as some pretentious rivers; for, as it dashed and hurried along with great speed, it received and transported refuse and débris from all the houses on its banks, whither I know not, but I presume the noisome freight was deposited in the beautiful bay of Havana, the foulness of whose depths is a reproach to Cuban civilization.⁵

Chea had to present a certificate of vaccination for all four daughters as a requirement of enrolment in the Sacred Heart School. Vaccination was even at this early date⁵⁷ compulsory in Cuba. Eliza, as a refugee of the American South, exposes her racial anxiety as she describes the double-barrelled religious and medical rite of passage for babies in 1860s Havana.

Vaccination, like baptism, is compulsory in that much-governed country; while the former, performed by surgeons appointed by the government for that especial service, is absolutely gratuitous, the minimum pay for the latter is two dollars, the church rendering no service without an equivalent. The morning papers each day announced the church where vaccination was to take place, as our journals furnish the weather indications. At the appointed day for the Cerro church, Martha (the family's slave nanny) and I presented our baby at the vestry, where there were already four little darky babies. The surgeon was kind enough to quiet any anxiety I might have evinced by announcing that he had white virus and black virus, and he never got them mixed. Our addresses were registered, and we were told to report the following week at same time and place. Martha and I, after the operation, followed the colored party into the church, and as the French express it, "assisted" in the baptism of the little Africans. I was nervous about the white virus and black virus, and was greatly relieved to find it did not "take"; but the next week the polite official presented himself at our door. He was kind enough to believe we did not appreciate the importance of vaccination, and when the second application of the lancet proved successful our little lady was furnished with a formidable certificate necessary for admission into any school in Cuba.⁵⁸

The outbreak at Sagrado Corazon may have been viral or bacterial in nature, but it was common for children to die very suddenly from what today would be a trivial infection. To improve his family members' health and spirits after Rosa's death Antonio took them north that summer to Alexandria Bay

she contracted while at school and Mama became so delicate that Papa brought us to spend the summer in "el Norte" in Alexandria Bay on the Thousand Islands; later he returned alone to Havana and left us installed in a house on the same 23rd Street that we had lived in ten years before. The Mestre family, whose children were close friends of ours still lived there.)

⁵⁷ Bishop Espada who served in Havana from 1799 to 1832 patronized many public welfare projects and gave pastoral approval to the newly discovered vaccination against smallpox. McCadden, Joseph J. "The New York-to-Cuba Axis of Father Varela" p. 377. [New York-Cuba Axis of Father Varela](#) (accessed. 24 June 2011).

⁵⁸ Ripley, Eliza. *From Flag To Flag, A womans' Adventures and Experiences in the South during the War, in Mexico and in Cuba*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1998. [From Flag to Flag](#) (accessed 24 June 2011)140

in Thousand Islands, New York, a nature resort that was becoming fashionable.⁵⁹ It offered such restorative activities as early morning fishing, boating, croquet and picnics among the pines. On their return to Havana, after some months that fall in New York, Maria Antonia and Felicia did not go back to the Sacred Heart boarding school but were instead educated by a governess in their home. However, Julia had grown fond of the convent school life and asked to remain until her graduation that same year.⁶⁰ Her mother's example had impressed upon her the fact that the Church was an essential part of a woman's life.



Federico Miahle, Iglesia de l Santo Cristo (Habana), Isla de Cuba pintoresca, 1839, Picture 11, detail [University of Miami Cuban Heritage Collection](#)

The Church, female supporters versus male anti-clericalism; the church as an arena of female public display, Julia's vow of poverty

The Church was the preserve of women in Cuba. It was customary for men to stand in the portals during mass. While they appreciated the social gathering they disdained the institution. Writing from Havana on April 15, 1853 Frederika Bremer, a Swedish writer and social reformer, condemns the female display during the supposedly solemn religious observances leading up to Easter.

This is Maunday-Thursday, a great holiday in the Christian Church, and I have this morning visited two churches in the city. There was great pomp in them. Ladies, dressed

⁵⁹ "The Thousand Islands; A Fairy Spot in the Broad St. Lawrence" *The New York Times*, August 11, 1881

⁶⁰ J. Batista, unpublished memoirs

as for a ball, knelt upon splendid mats in silk attire, and satin shoes, jewels, gold ornaments, and flowers, with bare neck and arms, and everywhere the transparent black mantillas, and everywhere glittering, waving fans. Quite young girls, even, were so tricked out; and all around them stood gentlemen contemplating the ladies through their lorgnettes. The sight of all these adorned, only half-veiled women of all colors--for mulattoes also, very splendidly attired and with magnificent figures, were among them--prostrated in crowds on their knees in the centre aisle of the church, from the very end to the altar, is really beautiful, especially as the eyes and busts of the Spanish women are generally remarkably lovely. But the want of earnestness in everything, excepting in vanity and the wish to be admired, was very striking, especially on a day such as this--the day of the Lord's Supper--that calm, unpretending, solemn day of initiation to the highest and holiest life of humanity. I called to remembrance a Maunday-Thursday in St. Jacob's Church at Stockholm; there simply called "Going to the Lord's Supper." Whole families assemble--father, mother, and children, assemble to drink together from the cup. I remembered the silence, the calm, deep devotion of all who filled that crowded church! ... In the evening. I have again visited three or four churches. They are splendidly illuminated this evening, especially the choirs and around the altar-pieces. They were less crowded than at morning mass, and now principally by a lower class of people. Several seemed to be kneeling and praying with devotion. There sat, one on each side the entrance of the Cathedral, two magnificent Spanish dames entirely covered with jewels, each with a table before her, upon which a collection was made for the poor.⁶¹

In contrast to the bejewelled detachment of the collection box ladies at the entrance of the church, the middle aged Chea took a vow of poverty. This involved having her hair cut short, dressing simply and taking up a plain, restricted diet. Was the vow a public expression of her solidarity with the poor? Or, perhaps it was a path for her private spiritual development. According to her grand-daughter, it was taken after the doctor prescribed a simple diet to treat her kidney problem. Whatever factors drove her to it, the vow is proof that Chea was drawn to the life of the nun, very different in every respect from her existence as a wife, mother and head of a large and complex household. And, having passed the period when she was most urgently needed by her family, she had the opportunity to distance herself from its expectations. A hint of this is conveyed by her complacency in the face of family members' reaction to her shorn head:

In the last part of her life when she was suffering from albuminuria she began dressing with great simplicity and it was then that she took the vow of poverty. This is the image that I will always keep of her, in her black dress with her hair cut in a short mane. The diet prescribed for her illness prevented her from coming up to the dining room; one morning while we lunched, she sent for the neighbouring barber and when Grandfather and the children came down she gave them the surprise, she was very amused with the protests and complaints that were by then useless.⁶²

⁶¹ Bremer, Fredrika. *The homes of the new world; impressions of America. / Hemmen i den Nya verlden*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1853. [The Homes of the New World: impressions of America](#)

⁶² "En los últimos tiempos de su vida cuando ya sufría de albuminuria empezó a vestirse con gran sencillez y sería entonces cuando hizo el voto o promesa de pobreza. Así es la imagen que de ella conserve, con un traje negro el pelo cortado en una melenita. La dieta especial prescrita por su enfermedad le impedía subir al comedor; una mañana mientras almorzaban, mando buscar un barbero vecino y al bajar Abuelito y los hijos se encontraron esa sorpresa, y ella muy divertida con las quejas y protestas que ya eran inútiles." Julia Batista, unpublished memoirs



illustration from: Abrams, Harry N. *Cuban Elegance*, 2004. Web. July 23, 2011.

Chea's charity cases; the absence of a father condemns a family to poverty

Matilde Batista remembers her grandmother Chea's personal involvement with her charity cases: "She was very occupied with acts of charity sometimes I would accompany her in her carriage to visit Felina and Chata, ... who were very pale and thin; they lived in a very clean house in a neighbourhood that to me seemed very removed from Amargura, behind Jesus Maria street."⁶³ Matilde reveals that her grandmother's dependents were women and children without the protection of a man. The male-led family was the essential social unit in the state;⁶⁴ without the man women and children had no respectable means of earning a living. They were forced to rely on privileged women such as Chea for support. In the case of one family, the husband had been imprisoned, perhaps for revolutionary activity, a circumstance that would have raised the patriotic sympathy of the Gonzalez de Mendoza family. Another of Chea's charitable wards was a woman with children who at one point had been her servant. Matilde recalls that her grandmother bought and furnished a house for her. "Sara was an American who had for some years been the maid and nanny of Ramon and Pablo. Of course this was only the beginning of her assistance to her."⁶⁵

⁶³ "Ella era sumamente caritativa, algunas veces la acompañé cuando iba en su coche a visitar a Felina y chata, dos de sus protegidas, flaquísimas, pálidas; vivían en una casita limpia en un barrio que a mi me parecia lejos de Amargura, detras de la calle Jesús María." Julia Batista, unpublished memoires

⁶⁴ Under the Roman legal principle of the *patria potestad*, the father was the sole administrator of family income and the children were guaranteed protection, shelter, food and sustenance first and foremost by the family rather than the state. Stoner, p.14

⁶⁵ "Otra de sus grandes limosnas fue la casa cerca de la iglesia del Angel que compró y amuebló para Sara X de Crespo. Al marido lo cogieron preso, y ella vino de Remedios donde el había estado empleado en un Banco; tenia varios hijos: Pablito, Mercedes, Ricardo y me parece había otro. Sara era una Americana que había sido varios años criada y manejadora de Ramón y Pablo. Por supuesto que no se limitó sólo a este comienzo su ayuda." Matilde Batista, unpublished memoires

Chea and the delicate political role of the woman in Cuban society

In Cuba's patriarchal society, women had no role in politics. However, ladies such as Chea could put the power of their connections and money towards improving civic life through charity. This activity was mediated by the church in its women's service associations, groups that played a dominant role in the social life of the criollo elite. During the years following the family's return to Havana, Chea became the president of the *Hijas de Maria*, a lay branch of the Carmelites that administered charities in Havana.⁶⁶ The Hijas plied their influence among the powerful as advocates for social welfare.

Feminist scholar Lynn Stoner points out that for Cuban women personal fulfillment had to be squeezed into a narrow role defined by gender and class. "Within marriage and parenthood, women were inferior to men. Women were mothers and expected to be generous, tender, merciful, soft, timid and compassionate. Their only public function was to help children and disadvantaged women through Catholic charity organizations where the church could oversee their work."⁶⁷

In the first half of the twentieth century it perplexed many progressive American women that their Cuban sisters refused to directly attack the patriarchy or demand social equality. "Instead, they used their femininity in pursuit of their goals, the most important of which was general recognition that motherhood was women's divine right and that it justified their necessary political authority in nationalist Cuba. In short, they hoped to create a space for women in national and state governments as the overseers of welfare without displacing men who managed business, international relations, and other matters of state."⁶⁸ Chea was in the vanguard of traditional Cuban feminism within this cultural framework, embodying the caring function in society through her leadership of the *Hijas de Maria*.

In another respect Chea was idiosyncratic. Her vow of poverty went against the general belief that women should be dedicated to their appearance. Unless a widow, even into their middle-age they were to these dictates Chea's dowdy dress and cropped head expressed a search for an inward rather than outward centre to her experience. Her self-presentation was an act of resistance against a role that celebrated values opposed to her own. Within this context the political dimensions of Chea's vow of poverty would have approval from Fredrika Bremer and other nineteenth century proto-feminists. In this light, her vow appears less the act of a bored matron overly influenced by contact with Religious Orders, than a courageous protest against the values of her surrounding culture using the means available to her.

The Parables of Chea: the improvements to San Felipe Nereo; the sale of the silver plate

Chea spent much of her time in the churches of the city. She developed favourites and contributed generously to their upkeep and enhancement. San Felipe Nereo, an already ancient church by the 1880's, was located just north of the Gonzalez de Mendoza home. She asked Carlos Batista, an artist and the brother of Melchor her son-in-law, to paint a fresco of a curtain of flowers for the church's

⁶⁶ "Abuelita fue una de las primeras señoras en desempeñar el honroso cargo de presidenta de la congregación de Hijas de Maria, a la que luego han pertenecido tantas de sus descendientes." Matilde Batista, unpublished memoirs

⁶⁷ Stoner, K. Lynn. *From the house to the streets: the Cuban women's movement for legal reform*. (Duke University Press, 1997) 14

⁶⁸ Stoner, 1997. 10

chapel of the Virgin.⁶⁹ Her dedication to San Felipe's improvements is the subject of one of the family's favourite stories; as told by Matilde, it also reveals her husband's sense of humour and shared morality.

She won 10,000 pesos in a lottery. I am convinced that this win was due to her prayers because she immediately donated her entire winnings to cover the cost of the marble floor that they were installing in the church of San Felipe on Aguiar, two blocks from our house. Of course, that amount wasn't sufficient and she had to continue her donations until little by little the floor was completed. Grandfather himself told me that he then told her: "Look Chea, this is the last lottery ticket you buy in your life because at this rate we will be in financial ruin." Very humbly but with a wicked smile she replied "Very well Antonio." In spite of the warning one could see by the tone of his voice how much he admired her generosity and her lack of worldliness.



San Felipe Neri, Aguiar Street, entrance, 2009 (photo: T. Casas)

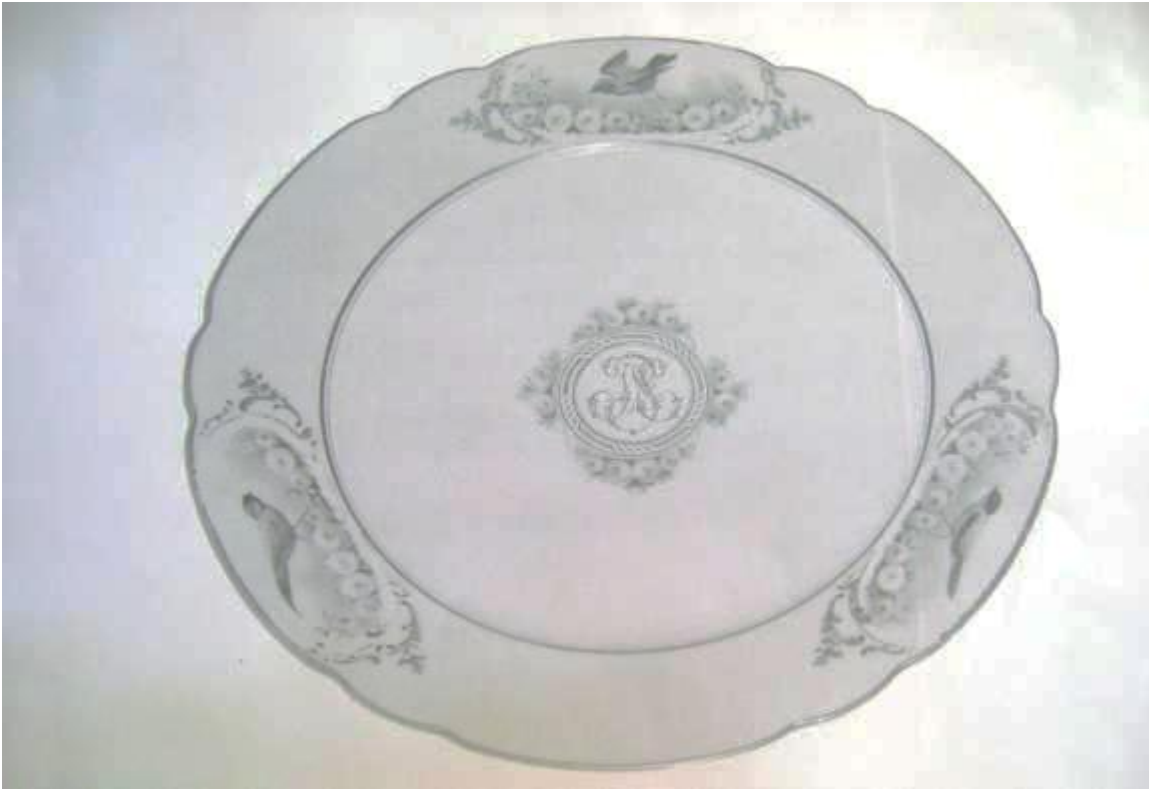
⁶⁹ Julia Batista, 117



Interior San Felipe Neri, 2009, photo T. Casas

On another occasion, she secretly sold heirlooms inherited from her father to finance a project for the needy. On the Feast Day of Our Lady of Carmen, on the 16th of July she would order a feast for lunch to be served on the service of Don Joaquin Pedroso y Echevarria. She belonged to the Third Order of the Carmelites. ...Mama told me that among other objects of great beauty she (Chea) had chosen six large silver serving plates engraved with the initials J.P.E.. These were needed for the feast and it was discovered with horror that only four could be found; with great alarm they went to tell Grandmother who replied very calmly that she had sold two because four were enough; the buyer had made a huge profit because he paid only for their weight in silver without taking into account the age and beauty of the articles.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ “Me contó Mamá que entre otras bellezas ella había escogido 6 grandes bandejas de plata que tenían las iniciales J.P. E. Se necesitaron para una fiesta y con gran asombro no encontraron mas que cuatro; muy alarmadas fueron a comunicarlo a Abuelita quien contestó muy tranquila que ella había vendido dos, porque no hacían falta, con 4 había suficiente; el comprador hizo el gran negocio ya que las pagó solo por su peso, sin tener en cuenta la antiguedad, merito artistico, etc. En un sorteo de lotería salió premiado con diez mil pesos el billete que ella había comprado. No me queda duda que esto se debió a sus oraciones, ya que inmediatamente donó el producto íntegro a los P.C. de San Felipe en Aguiar, a 2 cuadras de nuestra casa. Claro que esa cantidad no era suficiente y poco a poco ella siguió suministrando pequeñas sumas hasta completar. Abuelito mismo me contó que él entonces la llamó: “Mira Chea, éste es el ultimo billete de lotería que compras en tu vida, porque a este paso nos arruinamos.” Ella muy sumisa pero con sonrisa also maliciosa contestó”Muy bien Antonio.” Pero a pesar de la advertencia se echaba de ver por el tono de la voz, cuánto admiraba él esta generosidad y desprendimiento.



Photograph presented within exhibition of family history at Gonzalez de Mendoza 2007 reunion (photo T. Casas)

Matilde's story of Chea's sale of the silver plate reveals that the family was both horrified and proud of her grandmother's willful blindness to the artistic, monetary and family value of the inherited objects. Chea may have been repeating her defining act of rebellion against her father in her gesture of divesting herself of his personal possessions. The details of her convention-defying acts prove that despite the demand that the Cuban woman be, as Lynn Stoner puts it, "soft and timid," Chea could act with determined ruthlessness to occupy the moral high ground.

Chea's imprint on subsequent generations: Catholic marriage or Religious Life; Sacred Heart community: Leadership and Altar Display

Chea prepared her daughters for Catholic marriage and this implied raising a large family.⁷¹ Attentive to Julia's needs when she and her fourteen children were undergoing financial hardship, she supplied her with money and clothes. In turn, Julia, heavily influenced by her mother, passed Chea's piety on to her daughters. Three of them become nuns, two within the Sacred Heart order. Julia herself felt a vocation as a young woman but, advised by her mother to wait, her desire for a religious life waned. Chea's three lay daughters followed their mother into the *Hijas de Maria*.

Chea Pedroso's personality is perhaps best captured in Matilde's account of her involvement with the altar decorations of the Church of Nuestra Señora de la Merced.

I am not sure whether it was Doña Micaela Montalvo Nuñez del Castillo or someone before she who had left a legacy to the Church de la Merced that was administered by

⁷¹ In her memoirs Julia notes that, with the birth of her fourteenth child within the period of twenty years, she felt that she and her husband had "carried out their duty."

the eldest daughter of her descendants. The goal was to cover the costs of the candles and the decoration of the altar on the week that the Circular was in the church which in those days was the most beautiful and well attended in Havana. In those days decoration was not done with natural but with artificial flowers; the manufacture of these was in its heyday. From Paris, no less, they were sent directly to Grandmother, branches of fantastical flowers not found on the face of the planet. She had a large closet-full; an arsenal of instruments ... Various respectable friends who were experts in the art would come to assist her. After her death, Mamá, as the eldest daughter wanted to be in charge of this pious work but Maria Pedroso de Morales, declared that it was her due; and so I was never again to witness such wondrous floral creations.⁷²

Matilde offers the image of Chea who, with her arsenal of metal tools, produced towering silk flower arrangements of ethereal elegance worthy of the altar. This act of pious tribute was also a mark of status within the parish. In colonial Havana Chea's mastery of the altar display in the pre-eminent church underscored her power within the church and her influence in society. Her command over the metal stems and delicacy of touch with silk petals reflect her winning mixture of iron determination and sleight of hand charm. In the religious and political realm of the women's charitable organization Chea was likely as powerful as her husband was in his secular, anti-clerical male preserve.

Geographically, Chea's devotional acts enacted the most ancient legacy of Colonial Havana's Amargura Street. This narrow thoroughfare on which her house was located derived its name, Bitterness, from its traditional use during Holy Week as the processional route for the *Via Crucis*, or Carrying of the Cross. On some homes' facades were green wooden crosses marking the regular intervals of the stations-of-the-cross that began on the east at the church and plaza of San Francisco and ended at the western extreme at the church and plaza of Santo Cristo del Buen Viaje. The street was the nave of an enormous open-air cathedral that sliced an east-west spiritual axis in the very centre of the city.

To the south was the Carmelite convent and church of Santa Teresa de Jesus. Chea attended mass there daily and made regular visits to report on the work of the *Hijas de Maria*. Matilde who would occasionally accompany her grandmother, was a reluctant visitor to the cloistered convent.

Every morning while she was still in good health she would go to mass at the church of the Carmelites; her maid brought a little ebony chair encrusted with mother of pearl; she liked to be

⁷² "No estoy segura si fué Doña Micaela Montalvo y Nuñez de Castillo, o alguien anterior a ella quien dejó un buen legado a la Iglesia de la Merced, que debía ser administrado por la mayor de sus descendientes. Tenía por objeto sufragar los gastos de velas, adornos del altar del Santísimo, la semana que el Circular estaba en ese templo, en aquel entonces eran el mas hermoso y concurrido de la Habana. Todavía no estilaban, no solo en Cuba, sino en ningún país, la decoración con flores naturales, y la industria de las artificiales estaba a su apogeo. Nada menos que de Paris le llegaban directamente a Abuelita los avíos para confeccionar unos ramos enormes de flores fantásticas, sin semejantes en ningún lugar del planeta. Tenía todo un gran armario con un verdadero arsenal de instrumentos, hierros, tenazas, etc. Varias amigas respetables expertas en el arte venían a ayudarla. Después de su muerte, Mama como la mayor de las hijas quiso hacerse cargo de tan piadosa obra, pero Maria Pedroso de Morales, declaró que a ella le correspondía: por tanto no volví a ver nunca más esas maravillosas creaciones floridas. la fiesta de Ntra. Señora del Carmen, 16 de Julio, mandaba todo un banquete a la hora del almuerzo servido en la vajilla de Don Joaquín Pedroso y Echevarria. -Ella pertenecía a la 3a Orden de los Carmelitas." M. Batista

accompanied by Margarita who was her delight but when she was away during harvest she would choose another grand-daughter; I went few times because I was too restless; she would make visits of what to me seemed interminable length in the priests' reception rooms and I would entertain myself by reading the pious statements that were printed on its walls such as "Brother, one of two" or "Don't talk if you do not talk of God" "Those in the home of Teresa must profess her faith."⁷³



⁷³ "Todas las mañanas, mientras tuvo salud, iba a Misa a la iglesia de los Carmelitas; su criada llevaba una sillita de ébano con incrustaciones de nácar; le gustaba que la acompañara Margarita que era su delirio; pero como le faltaba durante los meses de la zafra, cogía alguna otra nieta; yo fui pocas veces, era demasiado inquieta; hacía visita que me parecían interminable en la sala de los Padres y me entretenía leyendo las piadosas sentencias que en letras grandes adornaban las paredes como ésta: "hermano, una de dos – O no hablar, o hablar de Dios – Quien en la casa de Teresa – Esta ciencia se profesa." M. Batista

Plano Pintoresco de la Habana con los numeros de las casas (Plan of Havana with House Numbers) from *Picturesque Album of the Island of Cuba*,

Matilde was not suited to the isolated life of this convent but instead chose to belong to the Sacred Heart where she dedicated her humour and excellent ear for speech to teaching. Her stories have the dramatic polish that comes from frequent repetition. They were told and retold because they defined family values prized by the Gonzalez de Mendoza descendants, namely, strength of personality, high principles and intelligence.

The Once and Future Queens of Amargura: Purification and Protest in Colonial Havana

In contemporary Havana the churches that were patronised by Chea and the religious traditions of Amargura street are now enjoying a new life through the Official Historian's Master Plan. Carefully restored, San Felipe Nereo, among other churches, enjoys secular second-life as a concert hall.⁷⁴ In a further spin on its original function, it contains museum cabinets with archaeological findings from the most ancient years of the church. These are displayed alongside the entrance to the excavated area under the church altar. Through the Master Plan, San Felipe is transformed from Christian temple to archaeological museum so exemplifying the synthesis of historical interpretation and cultural animation that in fact is the de facto religion of Colonial Havana.

The deprivation that began with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the withdrawal of economic support to the island in the early 1990s was off-set by the relaxation of some social and economic controls. With Pope Jean Paul II's visit in 1998 there was an agreement that religious orders would be allowed to send priests to revive the life of churches, monasteries and convents. The new, less repressive attitude has helped to boost attendance at masses; however, this phenomenon has been dramatically overshadowed by the enormous popularity of Santería. A common sight on the streets is a person dressed in white from head to toe, and at times, sporting a matching umbrella. These are Santería initiates who are required for one year to dress in white, to avoid looking at themselves in mirrors and for some, to carry the badge and shield of a white umbrella.

Amargura Street has been re-animated by walking tours as an important Colonial Havana cross-street from the plazas of San Francisco to Santo Cristo del Buen Viaje. This route is promoted to tourists as a path that bisects the entire width of the old city from one plaza at the water's edge to another bounded by the old wall. Amargura also is a bridge between two important former monasteries, San Francisco de Asís in the east and Cristo del Buen Viaje to the west.⁷⁵

For Havana residents the street's long forgotten religious character as the traditional pathway of the Holy Week procession was revived after the 1998 Papal visit. Led by the Archbishop of the city Jaime

⁷⁴ "Oratorio de San Felipe Neri: el retorno a sus orígenes" *Opus Habana* 30 enero 2004 [Oratorio de San Felipe Neri](#) (accessed. 23 June 2011).

⁷⁵ After the English used the former as an armoury during their occupation in 1762, the monastery transferred to the corner of Aguiar and Amargura.

Ortega, the praying and singing of the faithful echo once more in, among others, the narrow stone streets of Chea's former neighborhood.⁷⁶

Another rendition of the "Via Crucis" is enacted by the *Damas en Blanco* (Ladies in White) as they protest the incarceration of their husbands and sons who in the spring of 2003 were arrested under charges that were a cover for their true crime of civil dissent. Using carefully chosen symbols, their agit-prop interventions in the urban space of Havana are disseminated through video on the internet extending the public space of protest far outside the geographical confines of the city.

The *Damas* use of the street is in itself an act of subversion, for in revolutionary Cuba, as the counter-protestors yell at them "the street belongs to Fidel." In contrast to the orthodox military parades and political marches, the *Damas* each hold a single gladiola stem and walk two by two or in single file, evoking ancient Christian iconography of early Church martyrs holding the palm fronds of victory in their triumphal procession into Heaven. Their white clothing allies them also with the *Santería* initiates who wear white to reflect their purification in their passage to full cult membership. In the narrow streets of the old city the drama heightens as the protesters and their hecklers are squeezed close. Security police, on cue, break-up the inevitable *mêlée* and cart the *Damas* off to headquarters. The procession is carried out along the satellite-fed byways of the internet to devoted Cuba-watchers. This digital incarnation of Amargura Street as a passage-space of mourning is the newest and most abstract of its manifestations yet.

One hundred and thirty years ago the *Damas* might have been the recipients of Chea's charity as women whose precarious livelihoods would have disappeared with their husbands. Nowadays the wives of prisoners can fend for themselves and like most Cubans can count on the state to keep them from starving. However the *Damas* exploit their marginalization from political power, somewhat like the historical example of Chea and her *Hijas de Maria*, for they have cleverly created a space of political engagement in the marginal territory available to them. In their appeal for mercy for their families and justice for their husbands the *Damas* have reached back in history and assumed the archetypal female caring voice in their society. In doing so they have touched a raw nerve for the revolution itself was intended to embody that very force as its essence.

⁷⁶ "Miles de fieles participaron la noche de este Viernes Santo en la procesión del Vía Crucis por las calles de la Habana Vieja, barrios y ciudades de la Isla, en un clima de mayor acercamiento entre la Iglesia Católica y el gobierno comunista, informó la AFP. Las imágenes de Jesús de Nazaret y la Virgen Dolorosa recorrieron en andas cerca de un kilómetro entre la Catedral y la Iglesia del Cristo del Buen Viaje, en la Habana Vieja. Entonando rezos y cánticos, la procesión, presidida por el cardenal Jaime Ortega, arzobispo de La Habana, pasó por la Plaza de San Francisco de Asís, y calles tradicionales como Amargura, que debe su nombre a la vía homónima de Jerusalén. En otras ciudades y pueblos de la Isla también se celebró el Vía Crucis y otros actos con motivo de la Semana Santa, aunque en Cuba no hay asueto. Las procesiones estuvieron suspendidas desde la década de los sesenta y fueron autorizadas nuevamente tras la histórica visita del papa Juan Pablo II a la Isla, del 21 al 25 de enero de 1998."

"Ahora, las festividades de la pasada Navidad y esta Semana Santa se celebraron en momentos en que las relaciones" © cubaencuentro.com 11 April 2009. [Miles de fieles al via crucis la habana](#) (accessed. 15 June 2011).



[El Nuevo Herald, March 19, 2010](#)

Works Cited

- Batista, Matilde. "Recuerdos de mi Vida" unpublished memoires
- Batista, Julia. "Fechas de Mi Vida" unpublished memoires
- Estrada, Alfredo José. *Havana, Autobiography of a City*. (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007)
- Garcia Hernandez, A. *Don Antonio Gonzalez de Mendoza*, (Abstract of the Lecture Delivered at the Havana Bar Association, April 17, 1942
<http://www.gonzalezdemendoza.com/AGdM%20Biography.htm> (accessed 24 June 2011)
- Gonzalez Mendoza y Freyre, Luis. *Don Antonio Gonzalez de Mendoza y Bonilla 1828–1906, Su Vida y su Familia*. Havana, 1951
- McCadden, Joseph J. "The New York-to-Cuba Axis of Father Varela" p. 377. [The New York to Cuba Axis of Father Varela](#) (accessed 24 June 2011)
- Perez, Raquel. "The founding of the Society of the Sacred Heart in Cuba." [Sacred Heart in Cuba](#) (accessed 15 June 2011)
- Ripley, Eliza Moore Chinn McHatton. *From Flag To Flag, A womans' Adventures and Experiences in the South during the War, in Mexico and in Cuba*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1998.
[From Flag to Flag](#) (accessed 24 June 2011)
- Stoner, K. Lynn. *From the house to the streets: the Cuban women's movement for legal reform*. (Duke University Press. 1997)
- "Miles de fieles asistieron al Vía Crucis por las calles de la Habana Vieja." *Cubaencuentro* 11 April 2009. [Miles de fieles al via crucis la habana](#) (accessed 15 June 2011)

Chapter 4 Antonio Gonzalez de Mendoza, The Ten Years War 1868-1878: Exile and Return

In the 1860's Cubans as well as Americans found themselves in national crises. Both centred on contending definitions of the rights of man. Freedom, intellectual development and economic progress were the banners of the United States that emerged from the Civil War. These essential values embodied by Lincoln were shared by his admirer, Antonio Gonzalez de Mendoza.

The two men were linked in other ways. They were admired as lawyers who could compellingly deliver an elegant argument. Most importantly, the two men shared a tendency to accommodate others and to work outside of rigid doctrinal positions in favor of broad principles.⁷⁷ However, while Lincoln's success lay in his political leadership, Mendoza's came from his ability to *distance* himself from the treacherous arena of Cuban politics so freeing him from the need to compromise his integrity.

Education, Circle of Reformers, Early Legal Career, Loss of Job due to support for Abolition

Antonio Gonzalez de Mendoza was born in Havana on April 4, 1828. In her memoirs his daughter, suggests that as a young man he had a strong social conscience. "My paternal grandparents ... lived modestly but they must have had money because they had a *quitrín*, the type of carriage used then, and my father would get off before arriving at O'Reilly between San Ignacio and Mercaderes, where the university was located so that it would not be known that he traveled in a carriage"⁷⁸

In 1855, when he married Chea, he was 27 years old and still financially dependent on his parents. As noted in his obituary, to obtain a lecturing position at the University of Havana he had to enter a competition that, "... in 1856, included deliberating on the question: Is cruel and unusual punishment an advisable form of sentencing for the deterrence of crimes?" His argument is not noted in the obituary but he earned a position on the strength of the essay, occupying the Chair of Penal Law and Mercantile Law from 1856 to 1866.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ In *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln*, Doris Goodwin studies the president's relationship with men who were his rivals for the 1860 Republican presidential nomination yet ended up in his cabinet as allies. To survive as a moderate at a moment of extreme partisanship Lincoln skillfully used negotiation and argument to fragment the solidarity of his enemies and secure his presidency. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2005).

⁷⁸ "Mis abuelos paternos Antonio Gonzalez de Mendoza y Rosario Bonilla vivían modestamente pero debían tener dinero porque tenían *quitrín* que era el coche que se usaba entonces y sé que mi padre iba en el a la Universidad, que estaba en la calle de O'Reilly entre S. Ignacio y Mercaderes, y como siempre fue modesto, se bajaba antes de llegar para que advirtieran que venía en coche." Julia Mendoza, unpublished memoirs

⁷⁹ García Hernández, A. "Don Antonio Gonzalez de Mendoza, Extracto de la Conferencia Pronunciada en el Colegio de Abogados de La Habana", April 17, 1942, reprinted in Gonzalez de Mendoza y Freyre, Luis, *Antonio Gonzalez de Mendoza y Bonilla 1828-1906, Su Vida y su Familia*. (Havana, 1951) English translation <http://www.gonzalezdemendoza.com/AGdM%20Biography.htm> (accessed 24 June 2011)



View of O'Reilly Street, Havana, detail, stereoscopic view, 1860-1870, [University of Miami Cuban Heritage Collection](#)

His circle of forward-thinking friends from university including Jose Manuel Mestre,⁸⁰ Francisco Fésser and Nicolás de Azcárate, were to rise along with him in the following decades. An important role model for them was Father Felix Varela⁸¹ who, though banished from the island decades earlier, continued to press for reforms by writing to Havana readers from New York. Although legally prohibited to do so, the young men met regularly to discuss Varela's views along with a wide variety of

⁸⁰ José Manuel Mestre, b. 1832, Havana. Professor of Logic (1856-66); lawyer; *Alcalde Mayor* of Havana, 1858; *Regidor* of Havana, emigrated afterwards. Thomas Hugh: footnote 7 p. 233

⁸¹ Upon his ordination in 1811 Varela was appointed chair of Philosophy at the College and Seminary of San Carlos... Instead of using Latin scholarship he prepared lectures and texts in the Spanish vernacular. He valued observation, reasoning and meditation above the memorizing of the pre-formulated syllogism of Scholasticism. He inaugurated courses in physical and chemical science, using laboratory techniques... Long after political events had sent him into permanent exile (between 1820-23 as a Cuban representative in the Spanish Cortes he had submitted a proposal for the abolition of slavery and Cuban self-government that caused his banishment) his followers kept in touch with him, learning from him and pursuing the roads which he had opened. McCadden, Joseph J. "The New York-to-Cuba Axis of Father Varela" p. 378. [New York-Cuba Axis of Father Varela](#) (accessed. 24 June 2011)

other contemporary writing from Europe and the U.S. Several times, they had to change their rendezvous to avoid arrest for possessing banned publications.⁸²

Perhaps the Union victory in 1865 inspired Mendoza to put his abolitionist beliefs on the line. Nine years into his career, he took a very public position that jeopardized the gains he had made.

On October 21, 1865, Antonio submitted a petition, written and signed by him to the Superior Civil Governor, requesting approval for the creation of the “Society Against the Slave Trade.” The group’s goal was “the complete and definitive extinction of the illicit trade known as the Africa trade;” it would require its members “...not to obtain or buy black slaves, directly or indirectly, traded into the island after November 19, 1865. “ A proposal for the wider emancipation of slaves was discussed at the meeting held at the Cerro residence of Jose Ricardo O’Farrill. Among the supporters were Jose Silveiro Jorin, Jose Manuel Mestre, Poey and Jose Ignacio Rodriguez. Their initiative failed when Captain General Dulce who having initially approved the Society, withdrew his consent a month after its creation. Mendoza was stripped of his University Chair by royal decree in 1866.⁸³ This was the beginning of a crack-down on reformers. As peaceful means of opposition proved unsuccessful, criollos in greater numbers began to support the idea of an armed insurrection against the Spanish.⁸⁴

The Ten Years War, Dissent over Slavery undermines the united stand of rebels

On October 10, 1868 Carlos Manuel Cespedes, a plantation owner in the westernmost province of Oriente, freed his slaves and asked them to join an uprising against the Spanish. His famous “Grito de Yara,” a proclamation of Cuban independence emerged from a wellspring of grievances: corruption, exploitive taxation, lack of political representation, suppression of the press, and prohibition of free assembly and religious freedom.

However, undermining their bond as resentful colonial subjects, the issue of slavery quickly became a source of dissension among rebel leaders. While Céspedes and many other landowners from Oriente felt it essential to liberate the slaves in order to add force to the armed struggle, other criollo landowners from the central and western provinces with larger, more intensively worked plantations opposed outright abolition.

The Spanish killed Céspedes in 1874. Salvador Cisneros Betancourt and then Tomas Estrada Palma replaced him as president of the rebel government. These two men led a struggle made possible by the financial support of anti-abolition landowners.

⁸² Rodriguez, Jose Ignacio. “Vida del Doctor Don José Manuel Mestre” Washington: W.F. Roberts Company. 1909 pp. 20-21 <http://www.bibliotecacubana.net/index.php?r=libros/view&id=132> (accessed. 24 June 2011).

⁸³ García Hernández, “Don Antonio Gonzalez de Mendoza” abstract of lecture, Havana. 1942 <http://www.gonzalezdemendoza.com/AGdM%20Biography.htm> (accessed. 24 June 2011).

⁸⁴ The new leadership in exile represented a sector of Habana’s liberal socioeconomic elite...they were primarily liberal, middle class professionals—lawyers, physicians, merchants, professors, entrepreneurs, journalists, and bureaucrats—although closely associated with the island’s wealthy classes...they were a socioeconomic group distinct from the large landowners and slaveholders; they were “La gente liberal.” Cuban emigré communities in the United States and the independence of their homeland, 1852-1895 p.68

Exile Community in New York, American Attitude on Cuban Independence Struggle

Mendoza, along with his circle of reformers, was a target for persecution during the crackdown that preceded this first war of independence. In 1869, as the arrests and confiscation of property reached new levels, Antonio left for New York with Chea and the six children. They traveled on the steamer Vapor Morro, arriving in New York in February of 1869. Jose Manuel Mestre was living on 23rd and Ninth Avenue; there the Mendoza's rented a house.⁸⁵

They would have fit easily into the community of Cubans that had made their way to that city to support the war through what means they had.⁸⁶ Fundraising events, rallies and lectures brought them together on a regular basis in this and other cities where they had re-grouped in safety. The lifeblood of the cause was the literary and journalistic output of their compatriots. Through the popular press, these writers' yearning for the distant homeland created in exile the romantic and enduring "Cuba Libre" tradition of patriotic images and messages.⁸⁷



23rd Street – 9th Avenue, 1927, [New York Public Library Digital Gallery](#)

⁸⁵ Julia Batista, unpublished memoirs

⁸⁶ Poyo, Gerald E. *“With All and for the Good of All!” The Emergence of Popular Nationalism in the Cuban Communities of the United States, 1848-1898*. Durham, N.C.:Duke University Press, 1989

⁸⁷ Poyo, Gerald Eugene. *Cuban emigré communities in the United States and the independence of their homeland, 1852-1895*. (PhD diss. University of Florida. 1983), p.81

Most members of the Cuban emigré community felt that freedom from Spain should be their focus. The divisive debate over what lay beyond that goal, annexation to the U.S. or outright independence, was a luxury they could not afford. To present a concerted front, most New York exiles supported a Cuban government-in-waiting.

Jose Manuel Mestre, in 1869, became a key member of the Cuban mission for a provisional revolutionary government. In a statement published in *The New York Times* on January 4, 1870 entitled “Address of the Cuban Junta to the American People” Mestre, Fesser and three other exiles attempt to “counter-spin” Spanish propaganda regarding the weakness of support for the rebellion. They provide statistics of the number of Cubans killed and wounded in action, the number taken prisoner and those surrendered and asking pardon. The Junta further reports that the army numbers 40,000 and “though not nearly as well armed and equipped as we would desire, are well organized.” They list the military leaders and outline the structure of the provisional government. “A Congress, or Chamber of Representatives...composed of delegates from every portion of the island now held by the Cubans has been sitting ...since the 10th of April last... Besides enacting the Constitution of the Republic by which a form of government similar to that of the United States is established, slavery, dignities and social honors are abolished; the liberty of worship, of the press, of petition, of public meeting, of teaching, and every inalienable right guaranteed.”

Although there was widespread sympathy for Cubans fighting colonialism and there was no attempt to curb the flow of money and supplies being sent, the American administration could not recognize the revolutionary government: having just fought a war against slavery it would have been contradictory to support a group of landowners who, despite the new constitution, had such a strong vested interest in maintaining slavery on their plantations.⁸⁸

The Attraction to Filibustering and the Dread of “Yellow Jack”

New York in the late 1860s was swelling in numbers and energy. Unlike the Mendoza family who came with \$50,000⁸⁹ most immigrants didn’t have the resources to move far from the docks. While their labour was needed for the frenzied building boom that made New York, in this period, the pre-eminent North American city, the spill-over from squalor and misery of the tenements they inhabited made for a tense social environment. Filibustering,⁹⁰ setting out on military expeditions for personal adventure and commercial gain to countries with which the American government had pacts of neutrality, was an important safety valve, draining the city of otherwise criminal elements. For those with more lofty ambitions these military expeditions to Cuba had the appeal of a crusade. In the period of expansive confidence that followed the Civil War there was excitement about the possibility of Cuba being folded into the larger nation.

The intrigue was at an all-time high when Gonzalez de Mendoza and his family arrived in the city. Under the headline “Cuba, The Movements in This City—Action of General Barlow” May 8, 1869 edition of the *New York Times* reported:

⁸⁸ Staten, Clifford L. *The History of Cuba*, Greenwood Publishing Group, 2003, p. 32

⁸⁹ J. Batista

⁹⁰ Cuban Filibuster Movement (1849-1856). [Cuban Filibuster Movement](#) (Accessed. 19 June 2011).

No fresh revelations were made yesterday about the much-talked of expedition from this City to Cuba....Last evening it was reported that a new regiment 1,000 strong was being raised to be commanded by Colonel James Kerrigan who was formerly conspicuously known as a Sixth Ward politician and who participated in the late war, besides being a member of congress in 1861. He is regarded as a daring and adventurous man and has unusual facilities for recruiting men among the rougher class of citizens. It is not considered improbable that he is ready to engage in the Cuban cause. A small number of printers and others, who are said to have enlisted in his enterprise, left Printing House Square early last evening and went to a drill-room in the upper part of Broadway, whose existence has not been publicly disclosed, where they were taught in the manual of arms with which some of the men were already acquainted. Several Cuban ladies were expected to be present to encourage them in their desire to fight for Cuba. The drills are thought to be of nightly occurrence and have been called to the attention of the Spanish Consul who is supposed to have detectives on the *qui vive* for new developments concerning the revolutionary movement in this City.

Notwithstanding this farcical representation, Americans largely identified with Cubans in a struggle against colonial oppression. Sadly, little glory awaited the recruits; those that made it to the rebel army and survived the scourge of yellow fever or “Yellow Jack” came home with reports of dismal conditions and in-fighting among the leaders.⁹¹



View on Broadway. ca. 1860, New York Public Library Digital Gallery, [New York Public Library Digital Gallery](#)

Exile and Travel in Europe

Despite his closeness to the leaders of the exile community Antonio Gonzalez de Mendoza deliberately chose not to become involved in the war effort. He was fearful of the possibility of his property being confiscated. Moreover, witnessing the diversity of political views among Cubans in New York may have sealed his conviction that annexation was the best outcome for a nation not ready for self-

⁹¹ *The New York Times*. May 1869

government.⁹² Mendoza's relative detachment was out of line with Jose Manuel Mestre's who was now a leader in the self-proclaimed government in exile. This may have created a social awkwardness between the families. Antonio distanced himself from the New York community by embarking for Europe in 1870 hoping to resume his work as a lawyer there.⁹³

Mendoza settled in Madrid where he struggled to establish a practice. His Madrid exile circle included Ramon Padilla, Nicolás Azcaráte, Bernardo Frau and Adolfa Muñoz. Chea's older brother, Manuel, who as a Jesuit priest was victim of persecution at the time, came often to visit. After the birth of Ramon in 1871, the family traveled to Switzerland and Germany and wintered in Hamburg. Friends advised Antonio to remain away when, after the shooting of university students in Havana, violence crested again. After a year in Germany, the family returned to Madrid in April 1872 where Pablo, the last of Chea's children, was born. The following year they retreated to Havana, Antonio's frustration with not being able to get clients in Madrid and their dwindling finances over-ruled other considerations. Antonio opened his law firm near the Plaza de la Catedral (14 San Ignacio)⁹⁴ and embarked on the most successful chapter of his career.

Return and Rewards

Between the years 1873 when he returned from exile and 1879 when appointed mayor of Havana, Antonio succeeded in re-establishing his law practice and building a reputation as someone who could act above political divisions. He worked for political and legislative reform as a member within a committee of the *Sociedad Economica de Amigos del País*, a Spanish-endorsed think-tank of criollo society leaders. At the conclusion of the first war of independence, otherwise known as the Ten Years War, the Zanjón Treaty offered limited governance to Cubans. Elections were to be held at the municipal level and the different political groups vied for votes. Perceived as having the moral authority and the moderation to infuse the office with new legitimacy Mendoza was chosen as mayor by the freshly elected officials who represented a wide variety of political viewpoints.⁹⁵

Mendoza was sought out by the political parties to occupy the Mayoralty of the City of Havana. He, who had never been a politician and who had actually led a completely apolitical life, accepted the nomination. But, with the condition that the contending political parties, Liberals and Conservatives, would not feud over it and that there be sufficient votes. Having been elected Councilman in the elections, he is elected Mayor by the council and is inaugurated on January 1st 1879. Mendoza serves as Mayor until December 1879 when he resigns alleging health reasons. This resignation was rejected because, in the words of the Council "his learning and his patriotic and peacemaking spirit have contributed immensely to the proper working of

⁹² Julia Batista as well as her daughter, Matilde, both state that Antonio was an annexationist and that this was based on his view that Cubans were not ready for self-government. "Algunos eran separatistas y trabajaban por la independencia de Cuba; pero Papa era anexionista porque pensaba que los Cubanos no se podian gobernar por si solos." J. Batista

⁹³ J. Batista

⁹⁴ J. Batista

⁹⁵ Justo de Lara: He never took a position, for or against, any of the big or small parties and groups that have dominated political and public opinion in Cuba. A consensus of all parties and groups elected him Mayor of Havana at the end of the First War of Independence in 1878. "Gonzalez de Mendoza" *El Figaro*. Havana January 1906. [Gonzalez de Mendoza obit. 1906](#) (accessed. 19 June 2011).

the municipal government of this City and to the efficient and harmonious work of the councilmen to the benefit of the City”; and instead of accepting the tendered resignation, an extended leave of absence was granted until “he has recovered his health.”⁹⁶

To preserve strict impartiality Mendoza refused his mayoral salary of \$6,000.00, effectively demonstrating his “noblesse oblige” attitude to political service. While the actual reasons for Mendoza’s resignation are not known, the short length of his term was doubtlessly related to his aversion for public notice and skepticism in the possibility of politics without corruption at that moment in the country’s history.

... Finally, his resignation to the Office of Mayor of the city of Havana was accepted by the Council in 1881, when Mendoza was appointed to the, for him, more agreeable task of Administrative Counsel and began to serve in that capacity in the amiable company of Galvez and Bruzon.⁹⁷

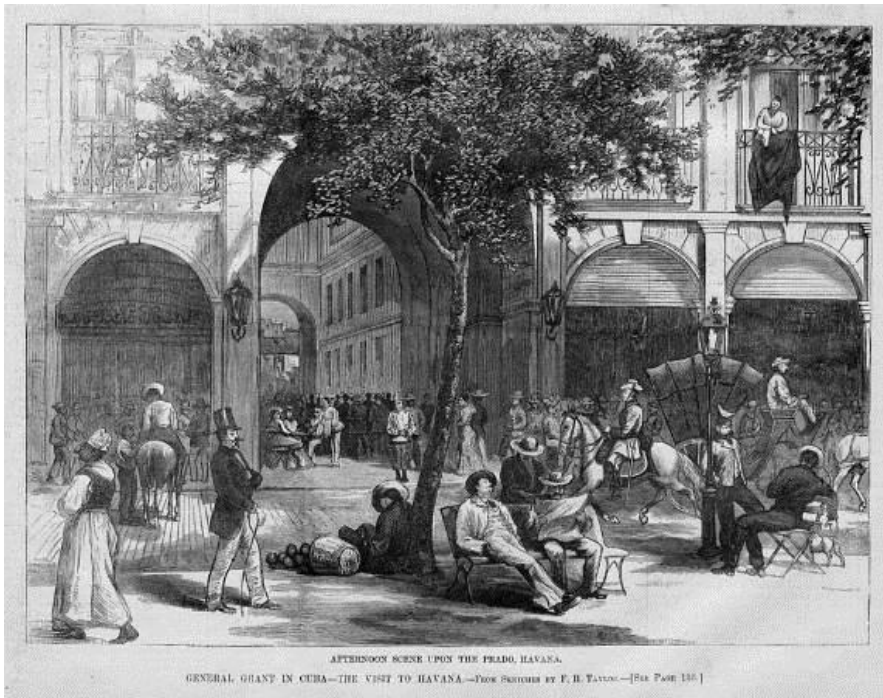
An interesting footnote is that, as the nominal city mayor, Mendoza after his resignation sat beside the former American president, General Grant, at the reception in honor of his visit to Havana in January 1880.⁹⁸ The ageing Civil War hero was on a tour of the Southern States along with visits to Cuba and Mexico where he was testing the potential for a system of international railways.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ <http://www.gonzalezdemendoza.com/AGdM%20Biography.htm> (accessed. 19 June 2011).

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ “Grant’s Reception in Cuba—An official banquet at the Palace—Visiting the Theatres” *The New York Times*. 25 January 1880

⁹⁹ Perley Poore, *Life of U.S. Grant* . Edgewood Pub., 1885



"GENERAL GRANT IN CUBA--THE VISIT TO HAVANA", published in "Harper's Weekly" February 1880. [Harper's Weekly Print](#)

By leaving the country yet avoiding involvement in the war Don Antonio politically defined himself as a moderate in Cuba's first military independence struggle. Likely he was drawn to Madrid in part by the presence there of his friend Nicolás Azcarate who had condemned the insurrection and worked for changes to Spanish colonial policy in that city.¹⁰⁰ Unlike his other close associate Jose Manuel Mestre,¹⁰¹ Mendoza was never declared an enemy of the state, his property was not confiscated and he was able to advantageously ally himself to the more progressive element of the wealthy class that had remained out of the war. The Spanish in the meantime took vengeance on those who had been part of the insurrection, taking possession of their lands, much decimated already by the scorched-earth tactics of both armies.

No personal papers survive to clarify Gonzalez de Mendoza's interpretation of the crucial years of the first war of independence. Was his delicate political balancing act assisted by being a member of the Pedroso family through marriage? Perhaps, but more importantly he survived the war unscathed and in a powerful position due to his personal strengths. This involved avoiding conflict and working towards concrete goals with tact and restraint. Mendoza's doggedly apolitical, pragmatic attitude was supremely useful in the postwar period and it served to garner him influence and admirers on all sides of the political spectrum.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Poyo 1983, p.70

¹⁰¹ Poyo, 1983.94

¹⁰² Garcia Hernandez

The period of exile from 1869 to 1873, seemingly a Cuban rite of passage, defined the entire Gonzalez de Mendoza family. For them and their children, New York was to remain the place of refuge, of artistic stimulation and of last-course medical intervention. Travel in Europe would continue for their descendants to symbolize the genteel aspiration to culture so valued by Antonio and Chea. But the family belonged in Havana. The individual members' lives were woven into the threads of Havana society through church, schools and clubs. More tightly yet, the Gonzalez de Mendozas were bound by privilege, pride and mutual esteem into the benign protective web of Don Antonio's domestic arrangements. For almost three decades, beginning in 1879, he would oversee the growth and health of his children and grandchildren within the family compound called Amargura, there protecting them against the economic hardship and political turmoil that characterized the last decades of the nineteenth century.

Works Cited

Batista, Julia. "Fechas de Mi Vida" unpublished memoires.

Garcia Hernandez, A. *Don Antonio Gonzalez de Mendoza*, (Abstract of the Lecture Delivered at the Havana Bar Association, April 17, 1942
<http://www.gonzalezdemendoza.com/AGdM%20Biography.htm> (accessed 24 June 2011).

Gonzalez Mendoza y Freyre, Luis. *Don Antonio Gonzalez de Mendoza y Bonilla 1828–1906, Su Vida y su Familia*. (Havana, 1951).

McCadden, Joseph J. "The New York-to-Cuba Axis of Father Varela" p. 378 .
<http://www.latinamericanstudies.org/religion/varela.pdf> (accessed 24 June 2011).

Goodwin, Doris Kearns. *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln*. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2005).

Poyo, Gerald Eugene. Cuban emigré communities in the United States and the independence of their homeland, 1852-1895. (PhD diss. University of Florida. 1983), p.70
<http://ufdc.ufl.edu/UF00098265/00001?search=cuba+=history> (accessed 24 June 2011).

Poyo, Gerald E. "*With All and for the Good of All!*" *The Emergence of Popular Nationalism in the Cuban Communities of the United States, 1848-1898*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1989).

Rodriguez, Jose Ignacio. "Vida del Doctor Don José Manuel Mestre" pp. 20-21 Washington: W.F. Roberts Company. 1909
http://bibliotecacubana.net/Autores/rodriguez_jose_ignacio/vidadeldoctor00rodr_bw.pdf (accessed 24 June 2011).

Staten, Clifford L. *The History of Cuba*, (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2003).

Thomas, Hugh. *Cuba, or, The Pursuit of Freedom*. (Cambridge: Da Capo Press Inc., 1998 re-print of original New York: 1977 edition).

The New York Times. "Address of the Cuban Junta to the American People" January 4, 1870

The New York Times. "Grant's Reception in Cuba—An official banquet at the Palace—Visiting the Theatres" 25 January 1880

Timeline

Abbreviations: b-birth m-marriage d-death

1795

b. Joaquín Pedroso Echevarría

1817

An agreement initiated by the British ends the slave trade, but slaves continue to be imported illegally in increasing numbers

1820

m: Joaquín Pedroso and María Micaela Montalvo

1828

b. Antonio González de Mendoza y Bonilla

1832

British colonies abolish slavery

1834

Spanish government appoints Tacón as Captain General and increases authority of the position to the equivalent of a dictator.

1836

b. Mercedes Pedroso Montalvo

1837

Cuba inaugurates first railway in Latin America

1838

Pedroso brothers and Montalvo family open Cardenas port and begin construction of railway from their Matanzas plantations

1855

m: Antonio González de Mendoza and Mercedes Pedroso Montalvo

she elopes from her parents' home at 10 Paula Street and they move in with Antonio's parents on Salud Street

1856

Antonio awarded Chair of Penal Law and Mercantile Law at the University of Havana

1865

Antonio petitions civil authorities to create an abolitionist society, the petition was initially approved but ultimately rejected and Antonio loses his university position as a consequence

1868

October 10, Revolutionaries under the leadership of Carlos Manuel de Céspedes proclaims Cuban independence initiating "the Ten Years War"

1869

Rebel leader Céspedes calls for the destruction of all the cane fields on the island.

G. de Mendoza family in exile, New York City, and then Europe

1873

G. de Mendoza family returns to Havana, settles in Jesus del Monte and then 173 Habana

G. de Mendoza opens office in Plaza de la Catedral (14 San Ignacio)

Julia enters Sagrado Corazón boarding school in el Cerro

G. de Mendoza family summer in Calabazar on Don Joaquin Pedroso's estate

1875

G. de Mendoza family summer in Arroyo Naranjo, remain there full year due to Claudio's need to convalesce after illness

G. de Mendoza family move to Obrapía 58

Miguel G. de Mendoza leaves school and apprentices in a "casa de comercio"

1877

Julia G. de Mendoza graduates from Sagrado Corazón school

d: Rosa G. de Mendoza from fever in while boarder in Sagrado Corazón school

Gonzalez de Mendoza family summers in Thousand Islands then spends fall in New York City

1878

February 8, Pact of Zanjón ends the Ten Years' War

1879

Antonio G. de Mendoza becomes mayor of Havana, resigns after one year

d: Joaquín Pedroso and Micaela Montalvo

Chea and her brother Manuel Pedroso inherit Santa Gertrudis plantation inc. 285 slaves,

Antonio buys Manuel's half and he and Chea liberate the slaves, Manuel, a Jesuit donates his inheritance to the order

August, A second uprising ("The Little War"), engineered by Antonio Maceo and Calixto García, begins but is quelled by superior Spanish forces in autumn

G. de Mendoza family moves to 23 Amargura Joaquin Pedroso's mansion that is subdivided into three homes. The children of Jacinto Pedroso live in Amargura 21 and Jose Maria Arellano, whose mother is a Pedroso lives in Aguiar 100